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"Oppressed with anxiety and sorrow, He fell down alone before God."

Page 44.

THE CORNER STONE,

OR

A FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION OF THE

Principles of Christian Truth

by Emily Taylor

Author of The Young Christian &c.

"In that Number the sleepless Mother watches"

BOSTON,

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM PIERCE.

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Abbott
1835

THE

CORNER-STONE,

OR

A FAMILIAR ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

OF

CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

"Jesus Christ himself being the chief *Corner Stone*"

BY JACOB ABBOTT.

AUTHOR OF 'THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN,' AND 'THE TEACHER.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM PEIRCE.

NEW YORK: JOHN P. HAVEN. PHILADELPHIA: HENRY PERKINS.

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PREFACE.

THE following work is intended to be, in some sense, the counterpart to the "Young Christian;" that having exhibited the first principles of Christian duty, and this on the other hand developing the elements of religious truth.

The experienced Christian must not look here for additions to his stock of religious knowledge. If I had had any new and peculiar views of any portion of divine truth, I should not have brought them forward in this volume; for it is the elements only of Christianity, which I mean here to teach. It is not my aim to advance the science of theology, but to disseminate its acknowledged principles; and I have endeavored to exhibit them simply as they are taught in the New Testament, and as they have been understood by the great body of Christians in every age.

There has been, it must be admitted, and there still continues to be, some controversy on the subjects treated in this volume; and how far what I have said may be acceptable to different classes of Christians, I do not know. I should suppose it would meet with

decided opposition, from some, were it not that I have often been surprised to see how Christians, who have been considered as entertaining views apparently the most diverse, will come together on a simple exhibition of the gospel, when it is not urged in a tone of challenge and defiance. A heated controversy drives men to such extremes in their expressions, that a calm by-stander cannot easily tell what they really do believe. Should any persons, however, find anything in this volume to disapprove, I trust they will do me the justice to admit, that I have made this exhibition of the gospel, with reference to its moral effect on human hearts, and not for the purpose of taking sides in a controversy between different parties of Christians.

The work is not intended to contain a complete system of religious truth. Like the "Young Christian," it is designed to be only one excursion into a field which is almost boundless; and in our progress through it, I call the attention of those who accompany me, to such objects, and to such moral scenery, as naturally come in our way. A system of theology is a *map* or a *plan*, in which every feature of the country must be laid down in its proper place and proportion; this work is on the other hand a *series of views*, as the traveller sees them in passing over a certain road. In this case, the road which I have taken, leads indeed through the heart of the country, but it does not by any means bring to view all which is interesting or important.

The reader will perceive that the history of Jesus Christ is the clue which I have endeavored to follow; that is, the work is intended to exhibit religious truth as it is connected with the various events, in the life of our Savior. In first introducing him to the scene, I consider his exalted nature as the GREAT MORAL MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINITY to us. Then follows a view of his PERSONAL CHARACTER, and of his views of RELIGIOUS DUTY. From this last subject we turn aside a little to consider the general CONDUCT OF MANKIND, its CONSEQUENCES, and the principles on which these consequences can be averted by PARDON; and then we return again to the history of the Savior, — to the scenes at the LAST SUPPER, and at the CRUCIFIXION. His PARTING COMMAND, and PARTING PROMISE, bring us to the CONCLUSION of the volume.

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PREFACE

TO ONE OF THE LONDON EDITIONS.

[The publisher has thought it not improper to prefix to this edition of the Corner-Stone, the following Introduction, by Dr. John Pye Smith, President of Homerton College, England, as it contains a very lucid exposition of the nature and design of the work, and a testimony in which much confidence will be placed, to the substantial correctness of the views it presents. A few passages relating personally to the author are omitted.]

'THOU knowest not the works of God, who maketh all.' They have a completeness which is absolute and their own. Man adds nothing of real existence to them. He can but observe, separate, and combine. The noblest discoveries in science are the bringing to light of facts which before existed: man makes not truth. Even inventions the most astonishing, and which have changed or will change the face of society, are only new and more happy applications of powers in the constitution of creation, already in being, and which, in many cases, have been secretly operating from the beginning of time. Man creates nothing, nor needs he; it is sufficient for him to bring to light what had lain in darkness, and to rejoice in that which God hath made.

And such are the riches of revelation. Flowing from the fountain of Divine Infinity, they are unchangeable, and yet always new. Particular truths, and all the classes of truths, like the love of their blessed Revealer, possess a breadth and length, a depth and height, which passeth knowledge: yet, they are pervaded by an entire consistency. In the mode of deducing those truths from the oracles of God, in the form of their presentation, in their comparison and combination, in showing their harmonizing principle, and in the illustration and application of these eternal realities, there is room for endless diversity. The Author of all knowledge natural and spiritual, 'the True Light which enlighteneth every man,' has shown his manifold wisdom in giving to his

servants the various ability, by which the 'truth which is after godliness' should be unfolded to the ages and generations of the world. The susceptibility of heavenly instruction, the immediate proofs of its necessity, the feeling which in a sense springs forward to meet it, and the circumstances which form a channel for its most advantageous communication, have varied in every period of history, and in every nation of men: and we are called to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, which have qualified human instruments to meet every change of demand which the eventful history of human nature is continually producing. How different from each other, in mind and talent, and in the character of instruction, were Ignatius and Augustine, Kempis and Calvin, Luther and Fenelon, Latimer and Leighton, Usher and Edwards! Yet each served the cause of truth and piety, the happiness of man and the honor of God, in ways admirably adapted to the culture, the taste, and the wants of their several ages; no one of them could have replaced another; and yet the one immortal element in the writings of each, has rendered them of imperishable value to all following times.

These reflections have arisen from the benefit and pleasure which, in a very unexpected manner, have been brought to me by the reading of the volume to which I am now presuming to prefix a recommendation. I scarcely knew of its existence, when a request, indicating deep anxiety, was made for an opinion on its merits or demerits. Not a page had I read of any other production of the author, so that I had no sufficient ground for a conjecture drawn by analogy. No course was left but to promise to read this volume with careful attention. Thankful am I for the occurrence which led me to do so; nor less for an equally unsought for train of things, which brought to me some information concerning the history and character of the author.

Under these circumstances, I thought it a manifest duty to comply with the desire of the British publisher, by venturing to give a statement of my convictions with regard to the value and utility of this work. It seemed not an unreasonable wish, that such a service should be rendered by some one a little practiced in theological reading; as Mr. Abbott has so much of originality in his manner of thinking, and of unguarded simplicity in his style of expression, as seem to render useful, though certainly not necessary, a friendly vestibule to his edifice. There might be peril that, without such a precaution, some readers would take a premature alarm, when they found some essential doctrines of Christianity conveyed in terms of simplicity and elucidated by very familiar analogies, which appear considerably removed from our accredited phraseology. Indeed I am no advocate for an abrogating of the old

and ordinary language of divinity. So far as it is just and in harmony with the Scriptures, I earnestly contend for its retention. Great advantages accrue from having terms appropriated, so far as good usage will warrant, to the expression of sacred truths. They serve, as terms of art do in human sciences, to assist recollection and to abbreviate language; and they have a solemnity and tenderness of association which aids religious feeling. But the most serious mischiefs will ensue, if we carry this practice so far as to establish a technical phraseology of religion, and seek to maintain its rigid observance. A facility is thus afforded to ignorance, arrogance, and hypocrisy. Persons acquire volubility in dealing out words, while they have a miserable poverty of ideas; they fancy themselves able divines, because they have learned a few systematic vocables; they cover error, often of the most noxious kind, with the assumed guise of truth; they nurse spiritual pride in themselves and their imitators; and they repulse, perhaps finally and fatally, men of sense who are unhappily prejudiced against evangelical religion. Whatever use we make of the language of the theological schools, we should never go beyond our ability to translate it into the plain speech of common life. If a learner of geometry cannot demonstrate with transposed letters, or without any letters at all, he will never become a mathematician. A person may have expertly learned the Greek nomenclature of Linnæus; but if, when turned without his books into the woods and hedges, he is ignorant and helpless, he is no botanist.

It is, therefore, I conceive, a great duty, from the pulpit, from the press; and in ordinary intercourse, to express the truths of our 'divine philosophy' in terms occasionally varied, adopted from the ordinary life of men, and selected with care to avoid both affectation and vulgarism. The understanding of all classes may thus be consulted, and the most probable means secured, under the blessing of heavenly grace, for winning a way to the heart.

This is what Mr. Abbott has done, in the plan and the execution of the following work. Its design is to show that 'the edifice of salvation must rest upon CHRIST as its CORNER-STONE;' and, with that view, the order of proceeding is to 'bring forward the leading principles of religious truth, as they are naturally connected with the various points of the history of Jesus Christ.' The chief of those principles may, as it appears to me, be enumerated thus:—the spirituality of God, and his consequent universality of relation to space and time;—the perfections of the Divine nature, both the natural and the moral;—the government and legislation of God;—the proper Deity of the Savior and of the Holy Spirit;—the impropriety of attempting to subject the

doctrine of the Trinity to human ideas or forms of human description;—the proper humanity of Jesus, his perfect holiness, his admirable conduct on all occasions, his teachings, his example, and the original and unrivaled manner in which he pursued and accomplished the purposes of his mission in our nature;—the atonement for sin, and reconciliation of sinners, effected by his sufferings and death;—the value and efficacy of his obedience as an active righteousness, for the complete acceptance of all who are united to him, before the tribunal of divine justice;—the way in which our guilty race has treated the offers of grace and mercy in Christ;—the inexcusable and dreadful consequences of sin;—the nature, the subtile forms, the guilt, and the awful punishment of unbelief;—the diffusion of redemption through the world;—the character of true Christians, and the modes of influence in which that character should be directed for the universal benefit of mankind;—the causes of dangerous error in religion, both primary and subsidiary;—the means of obviating those causes;—the usual fruitlessness of speculative and verbal controversy;—the moral power of simple truth;—the influence of the Holy Spirit;—the harmony of that influence, with the intellectual and voluntary faculties of the human mind;—its admirable diversity of operation on the various temperaments, ages, and circumstances of persons;—in parental discipline, schools and colleges, the public ministry;—the happiness, the peculiar temptations, and the duties of genuine converts;—the dreadful condition of those who become only half Christians, or who altogether reject religion.

The unfolding of these divine truths is effected in a natural and easy order, acquiring new light in the steps of progress, but very different from the dry method of scholastic systems. Yet this is not a religious story-book; a sort of writings of which we have, I fear, too many. The anecdotal illustrations are numerous, but they are all narratives of real facts: except that in one or two, the personality is ideal, but the action is not; and the distinction is scrupulously intimated. Notwithstanding this attractive clothing, the honor of Christian DOCTRINES is not infringed; their just conception, their accurate delineation, their mutual connection; in short, each element of theological propriety is kept in view.

However, I can easily conceive, I am even compelled to anticipate, that objections and even censures may arise in the minds of some excellent persons. But I cannot apprehend this consequence, except when the volume has been too hastily and inattentively read, or where the mind is preoccupied with the trammels of human artificial systems. This is a subject of serious importance. It becomes me, therefore, to be specific.

The sublime representation of the spirituality and omnipresence of the divine Being, which occurs near the beginning of the book, I can imagine, might be considered as identical with the irreverent assertion of Descartes, which was indeed only an offensive and paradoxical position, and which he explained so as to coincide with the truth; or it might be suspected of looking favorably on the intellectual Pantheism of Spinosa, or the more horrid material Pantheism of Schelling, or the thrice-changed hypothesis of Fichte, which he at last refined into the notion of a supreme, self-existent Author of life. But such a suspicion could never arise in a mind, which had taken the pains to understand those abstruse and worthless theories; nor should I have thought myself justified in hinting at this vague possibility of misconstruction, did I not know the vigilant and perverse ingenuity with which the spirit of error and falsehood works in these times, times in which the mighty strife between good and evil is constantly advancing to closer combat. Mr. Abbott has taught only the doctrine of inspiration, "IN HIM WE LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE OUR BEING;" and which is expressed in the first Article of the Church of England, and more strongly still in the Westminister Confession, 'There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions.' Indeed the author has subjoined a sufficient monition to prevent ignorant or unjust construction, at the very close of the important passage: see page 22. But I must go farther, and urge upon the reader a deep attention to this part of the work, as a matter of great practical importance. It is the very ground of the awakening considerations in Psalm cxxxix, and which we need ever to impress upon our minds, for counteracting that deep-seated and powerful tendency, which all feel, to form ideal conceptions of the Deity, and to imagine that, when we have risen from the direct acts of devotion, or have paid our periodical visits to the public sanctuary, we may go with a sort of relieving liberty into the world's atmosphere, and that there, amidst labor, business, or pleasure, the presence of God has become less intense, or is less obligatory upon our habitual regard.

Again: our author has repeatedly, and evidently with the most deliberate and emphatic purpose, declared that the Lord Jesus Christ is 'the Personification of the Divinity for us,—a Manifestation of Divinity, an Image of the invisible God, which comes as it were down to us,' which 'meets our feeble faculties with a personification exactly adapted to their wants.' For the ample protection of this representation, I need not load this page with an appeal to the best of the Christian fathers, and the wisest and most thoughtful divines since the

Reformation. I only entreat the upright reader to examine the passages *in their full connection*, (pages 48, 183, 189 to 191,) and I have no further anxiety. But a human writer's consistency, and the proof of his maintaining the proper Deity of our Lord's pre-existent nature, are comparatively small matters: our inquiry should be, What saith God the Lord?—"We beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father.—No man hath seen God at any time: the Only Begotton Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.—He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.—Christ, the image of God.—The light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.—The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." All that Mr. Abbott has advanced appears to me to be in harmony with these Scripture declarations, and with the holy application of these sublime truths: while he cautions us against the intrusions of human speculation, as presumptuous and vain, in disputing upon 'the precise metaphysical relation of the Son to the Father.'

But, perhaps greater offence may be taken at the manner in which the author supports the position that, 'by the sacrifice of the Son of God, the door of salvation upon repentance is opened to every human being on the globe.' p. 82. If a few sentences or paragraphs were detached from their connection, and rigorously refused to be judged of by the explanations which the author, with evident carefulness, presses upon his readers, a color might be found for the charge of an implied subversion of the grace of God, and of opening a door to the merits or the independent efficiency of human doings. The places alluded to are pages 55, 78, 79, 87, 88, 90, 91, 107, 108, 109, and probably in other scattered passages. In reference to these, I think it not sufficient to say, that many other parts of the work might be appealed to, for the arrest of such an unfavorable judgment; nor even to take the still higher ground of the frame and broadly displayed tenor of the entire book, as a satisfactory defence against such an imputation. I ask only a fair perusal of the passages themselves, and an attentive regard to their connection; not the hasty running over insulated clauses, but the serious pondering of the paragraphs which continue the subject to its close. To me it appears impossible, by any just construction of those passages, to elicit from them the smallest countenance to the notion, that the propitiation and righteousness of our divine Savior are not absolutely necessary, as the ground of pardon and acceptance for the sinner before God; or that repentance and faith ever did, or ever will, take place in one sinner's heart, without the gracious and almighty influence of the Holy Spirit. But the sentiments which, to my under-

standing, the author wishes to inculcate, are these:—that a sense of moral obligation *rightly* entertained, that is, sincerely believed and practically obeyed, in the affections, the heart, or whatever else we may call the active powers of the human mind, though attaching to any single object in the law of God, or comprehending never so small a range, in the earliest immediate, is yet of a holy *essence* and character; it is a germ of heavenly life; it wants but opportunity and the presentation of the proper objects, to be called forth universally to the same "abhorring of that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good:"—that the *element* of conviction of sin, and turning to God with unfeigned hatred of sin, though resting upon the smallest imaginable degree of intellectual attainment, is genuine and saving; and that it contains, in the minute but living germ, such fiducial reliance upon God, as would expand into a vital union of the soul to the Savior, were it even destitute of the outward doctrinal manifestation of that Savior:—that the proofs of wisdom, goodness, power exercised upon discoverable moral principles, and all-pervading scrutiny, which show themselves in the works of God, are, objectively and in the reason of the case, sufficient to lead the soul of man to those sentiments and feelings:—that, for this end, nothing is wanting, but such a state of mind as *ought* to be, and for the absence of which any rational being is criminal and without excuse:—that, in a word, the transgression and the ruin of the sinner arise from his own wilful rejection of holy good, and preference of sin:—that God has not left himself without witness to the human race, in even its lowest stages of degeneracy:—that men in every age and country are without excuse, who glorify him not as God:—and that, while salvation is of grace, the grace which is thus divinely effectual operates in perfect harmony with the judgment and the voluntary powers of man.

On what Mr. Abbott calls 'the *ceremonial aspects* of Christianity,' I must profess myself to differ from him, and not to have been convinced by his reasonings. He holds the opinion that no particular form, for the constitution and outward administration of the Christian church, was directed by Jesus or by his inspired servants; and that, as the outward political circumstances of all ages and nations differ from each other, and so their genius, habits, and character, are different, it follows that the external form in which Christianity is embodied, may and ought to be varied, yet with moderation and careful judgment. This is not a new opinion. Besides some distinguished foreigners, eminent divines of the Church of England, and illustrious statesmen and lawyers, have been its defenders. It is enough to mention Cranmer, Whitgift, Stillingfleet, Burnet, Leighton, Lightfoot, Selden, and

Paley. My own conviction is, that the New Testament supplies (by sufficient notifications, though not in decretal formality) all that is requisite for the social constitution and government of the united disciples of Christ: and that its institutes, thus notified, are adequate to all cases, and capable, without violence or artifice, of being practiced in all ages and countries, and by all varieties of national distinction. Yet I cannot but ardently desire the universal prevalence of the catholic *spirit*, which, by its generous overflowings, has perhaps disposed Mr. Abbott's mind to the theory in question. Most deeply am I convinced that the general body of true Christians need nothing so much, as forbearance and indulgence towards each other in regard to these matters. To me it appears very clear, that, without the violation of any of their denominational principles, all who hold Christ the Head in faith and holiness of life, possess sufficient grounds for the practice of a universal communion of saints, in common assemblings for prayer, in brotherly interchanges of ministerial service, and in the participation of the Holy Supper. Were such a plan of union accomplished, by all classes of practical believers, (for it is to such only that it would be applicable,) I cannot but believe that they or their next descendants would find their other differences becoming evanescent.

The author has carried his principle to a very incautious length, when he asserts the perfect indifference of the *material elements* in the two sacraments.* I fully admit that the *spirit* and the *form* are in all moral acts, considerations to be kept distinct; and that Christianity, with a dignity and wisdom peculiar to itself, requires absolutely only the former, and allows the latter to be kindly plastic to the possible necessities or incapacities of mankind. Hence it is, to my judgment, a sound argument against the position, that immersion of the whole body is necessary to the validity of baptism, to adduce the fact, that baptism cannot be so administered, safely and innocently, to all subjects, in all climates, and at all seasons: and so I conceive that Christians, in countries where wine and bread are not to be obtained, (and such regions actually are,) ought to remember the dying of their Redeemer, by employing the material which with them supplies the place of bread, and the juice of any innocuous fruit, or even simple water. These are cases of necessity: in them a servility to the form would lose the substance and prevent the blessing, and so would sacrifice the end to a mechanical idea of the means. But from such cases, I would not argue that the *form* is of no importance whatever. In the

*The passage referred to here existed only in the earlier editions; it was some time since altered by the author. PUBLISHER.

very externals of the Christian sacraments, divine wisdom is shown; the elements in each bearing a manifest relation to the ancient and well known symbols of purifying ablution and propitiatory sacrifice. Indeed, Mr. Abbott plainly affirms that the sacraments, considering their form merely, are 'appropriate and symbolical,' and 'admirably adapted' to their purpose. After all, then, it is perhaps only the oversight of a devotional and elevated mind, that has beguiled him into the objectionable expressions.

But will any man affirm that, for the sake of a few passages in an extensive work, which are marks of human imperfection, in a writer who is indeed the reverse of arrogant in spirit or manner, the work itself should be condemned: and especially when any erroneous bearing, or even ungenerous construction, of those passages, is counteracted by the whole spirit and tenor of the work? We do not so treat the writings of Luther or Calvin, of Milton or Locke, of Hooker, or Baxter, or Watts. We modify, we supply, we mentally substitute a better phrase; we feel a confidence that, could we consult the illustrious dead, they would say that we were only treating them with equity. The same feeling I claim on behalf of Mr. Abbott, as a Christian in a far distant country, placed therefore beyond our reach for consultation. I myself literally knew scarcely anything of him besides his name, when, not ten days ago, I began to read this volume. But I have found it a volume so rich in matter of the most profitable kind, so informing to the understanding, so helpful to the judgment, so purifying and elevating to the best feelings, as to have excited in me an earnest desire and prayer to God that it may be most extensively circulated and most seriously studied. We acknowledge all good affections and actions to flow from the benign operation of the sovereign Spirit: but we know, from his word and from experience, that his mighty grace works its effects by blessing the use of appropriate means. When, therefore, means which appear to possess a more than ordinary degree of suitableness, are brought into view, our duty to man and to God binds us to be "fellow-helpers to the truth," in trying to extend the application, and so to multiply the usefulness of such instruments.

The excursive and familiar structure of the work gives it an advantage for readers who have not a taste for mere abstract reasoning; while yet the author has well succeeded in preserving simplicity of manner and lucidness of order. Though that order be different from any of the plans adopted by systematical works, the mind is supported in its attention, and is led forwards with pleasure, by finding that every subject rises out of that immediately preceding, in the way of some interesting juncture of fact or natural association of thought. Thus an

opportunity is afforded for throwing in, at the precise point where usefulness requires it, the discussion of a weighty truth, or combating of a prejudice, or picture of a character, or new application of a principle, or something terse and forcible for the warning against evil, or exhortation to good; "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

I should find it difficult to profess a perfect enumeration of the subjects, of deep importance and extensive influence in theology and religion, which Mr. Abbott has, in this volume, treated in a singularly happy manner. I have been especially impressed with the good judgment and the very useful tendency of his frequent induction of sacred lessons from facts in natural science, and from the sensible ordinations of Providence; uniting the argumentative force of Butler with the lively felicity of Mr. Jesse's two delightful volumes, 'Gleanings of Natural History.' So, likewise, the numerous disquisitions and the indirect references upon that unspeakably momentous doctrine, the duty and success of using the means of grace, and their connection with the sovereign and efficacious influence of the Holy Spirit;—the remarks on the use of terms in moral science;—those on the sources, the variety, and the influence of prejudices, in relation to divine things;—those on the necessity, yet the danger, the proper conducting, and the due limits of controversy.

But there is one department in the inseparable domain of theology and religion, upon Mr. Abbott's treatment of which I should be very blameable were I to withhold my convictions. Among us, as well as in the New England States, there is a body, large and respectable if considered absolutely, but far from large when viewed in comparison with the number of other professed Christians. It consists of those who disbelieve the doctrines held, as to their essential principles, by all other Christian denominations, with respect to the way in which sinful, guilty, degraded mankind may regain the favor of God, and the pure felicity of the world to come;—the doctrines of a divine Savior, his assumption of our nature, his propitiation and righteousness, and the restoration of holiness and happiness by his all-gracious Spirit. This class of persons is treated, by some public men, and in some influential writings, chiefly periodical, with scorn and contumely, and are held up to hatred, not to say persecution; they are continually represented as blasphemers and infidels, alike dangerous to the state, and inimical to all vital religion. Hence, thousands of excellent persons, deriving their only knowledge from the sources to which I have alluded, regard this portion of their neighbors with horror, never think of treating them with tenderness, never attempt to obtain a lodgement for truth and holy

affections in their hearts. Ah, little think these well meaning persons of the dishonor with which they impliedly brand the cause of the Gospel, and the extensive injury which they inflict upon the souls of their fellow-men!

The circumstances of my life have put me into a condition of more correctly knowing this class of our fellow professors of Christianity. I know that there are among them serious, thoughtful, amiable persons, whose minds are prepossessed with prejudices against us and our system, much to the same extent as we are against them and theirs. I know not merely how they reason, but *how they feel.* They in general have extremely erroneous conceptions of the orthodox system of faith. They have imbibed those misconceptions in early years; and subsequent circumstances have contributed to strengthen them. For some of those circumstences, of no trivial power to confirm prejudice, we have to blame ourselves.

This is a state of things full of mischief and danger. Surely it is a pressing duty, to do all that we can for clearing away the clouds of ignorance and misrepresentation which, with so dire effect, discolor and distort the objects seen through them. For this purpose, it is to me a heart-felt pleasure to say, that Mr. Abbott's 'CORNER-STONE' is admirably adapted. Notions producing feelings, and those feelings of deep and wide activity in the formation of religious sentiments, have been derived from Pelagius, Socinus and Episcopius, from Clarke, Law and Watson, from Lardner, Priestley and Channing; and it is the thoroughly pervading influence on the mind of those mutually acting feelings and sentiments, which produces all that is formidable in the theoretical objections, and much of that which is effective in the practical repugnance, which are entertained by many against the doctrines of grace and holiness through the atonement and the Spirit of Christ. How desirable then to meet those feelings in their germinating principle; to anticipate those sentiments by a dissolution of the causes which would form them! This is what our author has done. His reasonings and illustrations upon the personal and official attributives of our Lord and Savior, are such as may be compared to the correctness of anatomical knowledge, the delicacy of touch, and the astonishing preciseness of applying the probe and the knife, which we admire in the first surgeons of the age. In those processes of argumentation, and the imagery created to elucidate them, which general readers will only regard as satisfactory and beautiful, there is, what will be immediately felt by the class to which I allude, something which will go to the excision of a deep-seated prejudice, or the rectifying of a false assump-

tion, or the bringing forth of a truth, now brightly shining in its own evidence, but which had been before buried deep under the black and cold ashes of unsuspected ignorance.

If this class of persons could be induced, seriously, candidly, and with fervent prayer to the Author of truth and Fountain of mercy, to read this book, I am fully certain that most happy results would follow. May they thoroughly consider, and practically apply the divine axiom; "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning!"

I have thus complied with the request made to me from a quarter justly entitled to respectful regard, in frankly expressing the opinions, which an attentive perusal has enabled me to form, upon this volume, of which the spirit and execution are but an expansion of the motto, "JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF, THE CHIEF CORNER-STONE." Let it be our fervent prayer that the author's pious desires may be extensively fulfilled; and that the work may be greatly blessed, to the advancement of true religion, and "to the praise and glory of HIS grace," who is "the Father of mercies and God of all consolation."

J. P. S.

Homerton, July 30, 1834.

THE

CORNER-STONE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEITY.

"The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Address to the reader. Preparation of the heart.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine;" so said the Saviour, and the obvious inference from it is, that we are to act up to the light we have, before we seek for more. Reader, are you *doing God's will?* This book is intended to explain such of the elementary principles of the gospel of Christ, as are necessary to supply the most pressing wants of a human soul hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and this gospel, the Bible assures us, cannot be understood, unless the heart is willing to comply with its claims. If you have not confessed your sins therefore, and asked forgiveness,—if you do not habitually strive against temptation, seeking help from above,—if you do not aim at doing the will of God in your daily pursuits, I do earnestly advise you to go to God before you proceed farther, and implore his forgiveness for the past, and in the most solemn and emphatic manner, commit yourself to him for the future. Whatever difficulties in your mind hang around the subjects connected with religious truth, you certainly know enough to see that this is a duty, and you cannot neglect or postpone obedience without doing violence to conscience, and displeasing God.

Do it then, before you proceed any farther. You will then have God's guidance and assistance as you go on. You will be preserved from error and led into the truth. Your heart being opened, the instruction which this volume may present, will enter into it, and contribute to its improvement and happiness. But it will do no good to heap up the truth before a door which is securely barred against what is already there.

Some centuries ago, a large, a very large company were travelling northwardly in early summer, through a lovely country, whose hills and valleys were clothed with the fig-tree, the olive, and the vine. They journeyed slowly and without anxiety or care, for their route lay through a quiet land, the abode of peace and plenty. Friends and acquaintances were mingled together in groups, as accident or inclination might dictate, until the sun went down, and the approach of evening warned them to make preparations for rest. While the various families were drawing off together for this purpose, the attention and the sympathy of the multitude were excited by the anxious looks and eager inquiries of a female, who was passing from group to group, with sorrow and agitation painted on her countenance. It was a mother, who could not find her son. It was her only son, and one to whom, from peculiar circumstances, she was very strongly attached. He had never disobeyed her;—he had never given her unnecessary trouble, and the uncommon maturity of his mental and moral powers had probably led her to trust him much more to himself than in any other case would be justifiable. He was twelve years old, and she supposed that he had been safe in the company, but now night had come, and she could not find him. She went anxiously and sorrowfully from family to family, and from friend to friend, inquiring with deep solicitude, "Have you seen my son?"

He was not to be found. No one had seen him, and the anxious parents left their company, and inquiring carefully by the way, went slowly back to the city whence they had come.

The city was in the midst of a country of mountains and valleys. Dark groves upon the summits crowned the richly cultivated fields which adorned their sides. The road wound along the glens and vales, sharing the passage with the streams, which flowed towards a neighboring sea. The city itself spread its edifices over the broad surface of a hill, one extremity of which was crowned with the spacious walls and colonnades of a temple, rising one above another, the whole pile beaming probably in the setting sun, as these anxious parents approached it, in all the dazzling whiteness of marble and splendor of gold. The parents however could not have thought much of the scene before them. They had lost their son.

With what anxious and fruitless search they spent the evening and the following morning, we do not know. They at last however ascended to the temple itself. They passed from court to court, now going up the broad flight of steps which led from one to the other, now walking under a lofty colonnade, and now traversing a paved and ornamented area. At last in a public part of this edifice, they found a group collected around a boy, and apparently listening to what he was saying; the feeling must have been mingled interest, curiosity and surprise. It was their son. His uncommon mental and moral maturity had by some means shown itself to those around him, and they were deeply interested in his questions and replies.

His mother, for the narrative, true to nature and to fact, makes the mother the foremost parent in every thing connected with the search for their son, does not reproach him. She could not reproach one who had been

such a son. She asked him why he had staid behind, and gently reminded him of the sorrow and suffering he had caused them. He gave them a reply which she could not fully understand, and the feelings with which twelve years of intercourse, such as no mother ever before had with a son, had inspired her for him, forbade her pressing him for an explanation. "*She laid his words up in her heart.*"

With what a strange mixture of affection and wonder, and ardent but respectful regard, must the mother of Jesus have habitually looked upon her son. A boy who had never spoken an impatient or disrespectful word, who had never manifested an unkind or a selfish feeling, who had never disobeyed, never failed in his duty, but had, for twelve long years, never given father or mother an unnecessary step, or a moment's uneasiness, or neglected any thing which could give them pleasure. My reader, are you still under your father's roof? If so, try the experiment of doing in every respect for a single week, your duty to father and mother; fill your heart with kindness and love to them, and let your words and your actions be in all respects controlled by these feelings; — be the disinterested and untiring friend and helper of your little brothers and sisters;—in a word, do your whole duty, in the family of which you form a part, making filial affection and respect the evident spring, and you will fill a mother's heart with gladness at the change. You can then a little understand the deep tide of enjoyment, which must have filled Mary's heart, during the childhood of her spotless son.

What, too, must have been the progress of his mind, in knowledge and wisdom. A mind, never allured away by folly, or impeded by idleness, or deranged by passion. Conceive of a frame too, which no guilty indulgence of appetite or propensity had impaired, and a countenance which was bright with its expression of intelligence and

energy, and yet beaming with kindness and love. It was the perfection of human nature, the carrying out to its limit, of all which God originally intended in the creation of man. And why was it so? How has it happened, that among the millions upon millions of children who have by disobedience, ingratitude and sin, planted thorns in their mothers' pillows, and often thrown sadness about the circle in which they moved, this boy had been the only spotless one? How is it, that he alone had walked in purity,—that he alone had never sinned, never sought selfishly his own, never given a parent pain, never injured a playmate, or returned an impatient word, or struck a blow in anger, or harbored a feeling of revenge? He stands a glorious monument of perfect filial virtue, the more glorious because it is solitary. No other nation or kindred or people or clime, ever furnished such a case, or pretended to furnish one. It is remarkable that among all the endless fables and pretensions of ancient times, no historian or mythologist, no priest or prophet or philosopher has ever pretended to have found a spotless man. The whole world withdraws its pretensions. Every system of religion, and every school of philosophy stand back from this field, and leave Jesus Christ alone, the solitary example of perfect moral purity, in the midst of a world lying in sin. The motto of our chapter contains the only explanation. It is "THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST."

Almost all young persons are lost and confounded in attempting to obtain any clear conceptions of the Deity, or rather I should say, they are embarrassed and perplexed by many false and absurd impressions, which come up with them from childhood, and which cling to them very obstinately in riper years. Let us turn away then a short time from the history of the child Jesus, that we may look a little into this subject. It is not an easy one It will require patient thought and close

attention. You ought to pause from time to time, as you read the following paragraphs, to look within and around you, and to send forth your conceptions far away in the regions into which I shall attempt to guide them. And above all remember that if ever you need divine assistance, it is when you attempt to look into the nature and character of that *Power* which is the origin and the support of all other existence.

In the first place, let us take a survey of the visible universe, that we may see what manifestations of God appear in it. Let us imagine that we can see with the naked eye all that the telescope would show us, and then in order that we may obtain an uninterrupted view, let us leave this earth, and ascending from its surface, take a station where we can look, without obstruction, upon all around. As we rise above the summits of the loftiest mountains, the bright and verdant regions of the earth begin to grow dim. City after city, and stream after stream fade away from view, and at length we see the whole earth itself rolling away on its course, and reflecting from its surface a uniform and silvery light. As the last breath of its atmosphere draws off from us, it leaves us in the midst of universal night, with a sky extending without interruption all around us, and bringing out to our view in every possible direction, innumerable and interminable vistas of stars. They grow fainter and fainter in the distance, till they are lost in measureless regions, too remote to be seen, but which are still as full and as brilliant as those which are near. In one quarter of the heavens, we do indeed see the sun, shining in all his splendor but as there is no atmosphere around us to reflect his rays, they produce no general illumination, and the dazzling splendor of his disk beams out from a dark nocturnal sky. The stars beyond him, bright and faint, as they are nearer or more distant, send to us their beams entirely unobstructed by his rays.

We have thus the whole visible universe open to our view, so far as telescopic vision will carry us into its remoter regions. Let us look at it in detail.

Do you see yon moon-like looking planet, gliding almost imperceptibly towards us on its way? From that portion of its surface which is turned towards the sun, it reflects to us a silvery light, while the rest of its form is in shadow and unseen. As it approaches us it enlarges and swells until it fills the whole quarter of the sky whence it comes. Its illuminated surface is turned more and more from us as it passes between us and the sun, and as it wheels majestically by us, we see, dimly indeed, for we look upon its shaded side, broadly extended regions crowded with life and vegetation. The mighty mass however passes on; a bright line of light begins to creep in upon its western limb. The darkened surface gradually fades from our view, and we soon see nothing but the shining crescent, which dwindles to a point, as this mighty world of life, covered with verdure, and thronged with population, wheels away and takes its place among the stars of the evening sky, itself soon the faintest star of all.

In another quarter of the heavens, we see a larger planet, whose surface it would take the swiftest human traveller hundreds of years merely to explore; but it beams mildly upon us from its distant orbit, a little gilded ball.

There are four bright points in the sky near it; two on each side, so minute as to be almost invisible, and yet shining with a clear and steady light, except when in their regular revolution round their parent orb, they disappear behind him, or are lost in his shadow. The whole group, the moons and the mighty mass around which they revolve, sweep on in their annual circuit with nearly the velocity of lightning, but in their almost measureless distance, their motion is to us so nearly im-

perceptible that we must watch them days or weeks to be satisfied that they move at all.

Measureless distance, did I say? No. The Creator of this moving world has framed an intellect which has surveyed the bounds of its orbit. Its distance is measured, and its mighty mass is weighed as accurately as any distance, or any weight can be ascertained; and human calculation will tell precisely what situation, at any instant, hundreds of years hence, the planet itself and every one of its satellites will have assumed. The maker of this machinery set it in motion at least six thousand years ago, and yet so precise, so unaltered and unalterable is the regularity with which he carries it on, that its motions are now the very standard of exactness among men. By these revolutions, an observer in the remotest lands finds what is the exact time at his distant home, and learns the very distance which separates him from it. It is in fact an illuminated clock which God has placed in the heavens, and whose motions he regulates, so as to make it an unerring guide to man.

Turn now to another quarter, and you see far, far beyond all that we have yet observed, a brilliant star, the brightest among all the constellations around. It is Sirius; the fixed unaltered Sirius. He has been watched for ages, and gazed upon by ten thousand eyes, but no one has discovered in him the slightest motion or change. He keeps his precise place among the feebler companions around him. His lustre never waxes nor wanes. No telescope will enlarge or alter him, or bring him nearer, and from two stations a hundred and ninety millions of miles apart, he appears in the same place, and shines with the same brightness, and his unalterable beam comes apparently from the same direction.

But inconceivably remote as this star is from us, we can see far, very far beyond him. The eye penetrates between him and those around, away into boundless re-

gions, where the vista stretches on from star to star, and from cluster to cluster, in endless perspective. The faint nebula is perhaps the most remote of all, whose dim and delicately penciled light, in the very remotest sky, is, every ray of it, the concentrated effulgence of a blazing sun, so inconceivably distant however, that their united power can produce only the vision of a little faint cloud, apparently just ready to melt away and disappear.

Such is the scene as it would present itself to an observer, who could escape for an hour from the obstructions to the view at the surface of the earth, and from the dimness and the reflections of our atmosphere. Our globe itself cuts off one half of the visible universe at all times, and the air spreads over us a deep canopy of blue, which during the day, shuts out entirely the other half. But were the field open, we should see in every direction the endless perspective of suns and stars as I have described them. And this too, *all around us*. Above and below, to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south. The conception of childhood,—and it is one which clings to us in maturer years, — that above the blue sky there is a *heaven* concealed, where the Deity sits enthroned, is a delusive one. God is everywhere. He has formed these worlds, these countless suns, and where we see his works, there we see his presence and agency. But the beautiful canopy above us does not conceal from us a material heaven beyond. We can actually penetrate it, and see that there is no heaven there. The Deity is the ALL PERVADING POWER, which lives and acts throughout the whole. He is not a separate existence having a special habitation in a part of it. If we look in every direction through this magnificent scene, we behold proofs of the active presence of the Deity in it all, but there is no material temple, no throne, no monarch with visible tokens of majesty. In fact if there was any quarter of the universe more magnificent

than the rest, with a visible potentate seated there wielding his sceptre, that visible potentate *would not, could not be God.* It must be a creation, not the universal, uncaused Creator. It might be a manifestation of the supreme power, but it would not be, and could not be that power itself, which from its very nature is universal in its presence, and which consequently no limits and no place can confine.

It will be observed by the reader, that I am speaking here of a heaven considered as the seat of government occupied by a visible Deity on a throne. That the future residence of the happy, will be a definite place, where extraordinary tokens of God's presence, and extraordinary manifestations of his power and glory will be seen, is highly probable. I am speaking only of conceptions which make the Deity himself corporeal, not spiritual, assign him a special place, instead of regarding him as the great invisible spirit, every part of the wide universe being equally his home.

Banish then, for this is the object to which I have been in these paragraphs aiming, all material ideas of a Deity, and do not let your imagination struggle to find its way upwards to some material heaven, with indefinite and idle conceptions of a monarch seated on a throne. The striking and beautiful metaphors of the Bible never were intended to give us this idea. GOD IS A SPIRIT, it says in its most emphatic tone. A spirit; that is, he has no form, no place, no throne. Where he acts, there only can we see him. He is the wide spread omnipresent *power*, which is everywhere employed, — but which we can never see, and never know, except so far as he shall manifest himself by his doings.

If we thus succeed in obtaining just conceptions of the Deity as the invisible and universal *power*, pervading all space, and existing in all time, we shall at once perceive that the only way by which he can make himself known

to his creatures, is by *acting himself out*, as it were, in his works; and of course the nature of the manifestation which is made will depend upon the nature of the works. In the structure of a solar system, with its blazing centre and revolving worlds, the Deity, invisible itself, acts out its mighty *power*, and the unerring perfection of its intellectual *skill*. At the same time, while it is carrying on these mighty movements, it is exercising in a very different scene, its untiring *industry*, and unrivalled *taste*, in clothing a mighty forest with verdure, bringing out in beauty its millions of opening buds, and painting, by slow and cautious steps, the petal of every flower, and every insect's wing. And so everywhere this unseen and universal Essence, acts out its various attributes, by its different works. We can learn its nature only by the character of the effects which spring from it.

But I hear my reader say, "I cannot dispel the idea that there is above me, somewhere in the lofty sky, the peculiar residence of Jehovah, from which he puts forth, as it were, his arm, and produces all these effects in the more distant regions of his creation; and I cannot but hope that one day I shall see him there."

See him there! What do you expect to see? What can you see? There is nothing but form and color which is visible to the human eye. And is the Deity form and color? No. Dispel these unworthy conceptions of God. Go out in the evening, and gaze up into the clear sky, till you realize that you can see away into those distant regions, far beyond the sphere which your childish imagination has assigned as the residence of God. Then reflect that the whole scene which you thus gaze into, will, in a few hours, be beneath your feet. Try to dispel the illusion, and thoroughly fix in your mind, so that it shall never leave you, the conception that the Deity is the all-pervading, universal and invisible power. He is below, as much as he is above; for if we could perforate

the earth, and look through to what is beneath our feet, we should find there as many worlds, as many blazing suns and shining stars, and as endless perspectives of brightness and beauty, all marking the presence and the agency of God, as we ever see above.

This universal essence then, must display to us its nature, by acting itself out in a thousand places, by such manifestations of itself, as it wishes us to understand. Does God desire to impress us with the idea of his power? He darts the lightning from cloud to cloud,—or rolls the thunder,—or shakes continents by his unseen hand. Does he wish to beam upon us in love? What can be more expressive than the sweet summer sunset and the thousand nameless tints and hues which give its expression of peace and happiness to the landscape, and air, and sky of evening. How can he make us acquainted with his benevolence and skill? Why by acting them out in some mechanism which exhibits them. He may construct an eye, or a hand for man, filling them with ingenious contrivances for our benefit, so numerous, that the very being who uses them may be centuries in exploring their mysterious wonders and yet not learn them all. How can he give us some conception of his intellectual powers? He can plan the motions of planets, and so exactly balance their opposing forces, that thousands of years shall not accumulate the slightest error, or disturb the unchanging precision of their way. But the great question, after all is to come. It is the one to which we have meant that all which we have been saying should ultimately tend. How can such a being exhibit the moral principle by which his mighty energies are all controlled?

He is an unseen, universal power, utterly invisible to us, and imperceptible, except so far as he shall act out his attributes in what he does. *How shall he act out moral principle?* It is easy by his material creations, to

make any impression upon us, which material objects can make; but how shall he exhibit to us the moral beauty of justice, and benevolence, and mercy between man and man? How shall he exhibit to us clearly his desire that sorrow and suffering on earth should be mitigated, and injuries forgiven, and universal peace and good will reign among the members of this great family. Can he do this by the thunder, the lightning or the earthquake? Can he do it by the loveliness of the evening landscape, or the magnificence and splendor of countless suns and stars? No. He might *declare* his moral attributes as he might have declared his power; but if he would bring home to us the one, as vividly and distinctly as the other, he must act out his moral principles, by a moral manifestation, in a moral scene; and the great beauty of Christianity is, that it represents him as doing so. He brings out the purity, and spotlessness, and moral glory of the Divinity, through the workings of a human mind, called into existence for this purpose, and stationed in a most conspicuous attitude among men. In the movements of a planet we see the *energy* of the Deity in constant occupation, showing us such powers and principles as majestic motion can show; and in the moral movements of a mind, in which the energies of a Deity equally mingle, and which they equally guide, we have the far more important manifestation which the movements of thought and feeling can show. Without some direct manifestation of the Deity in the spiritual world, the display of his character would be fatally incomplete, and it is a beautiful illustration of the more than harmony which exists between nature and revelation, that the latter does thus, in precise analogy, exactly complete what the former had begun. Thus the moral perfections of divinity show themselves to us in the only way by which, so far as we can see, it is possible directly to show them, by coming out in action, in the very field of human duty, by

a mysterious union with a human intellect and human powers. It is GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH; the visible moral image of an all pervading moral Deity, himself for ever invisible.

My object in this chapter, thus far, has been to show my readers, in what way, and on what principles they are to study the character of God. The substance of the view, which I have been wishing to impress upon your minds, is, that we are to expect to see him solely through the manifestations he makes of himself in his works. We have seen in what way some of the traits of his character are displayed in the visible creation, and how at last he determined to manifest his moral character, by bringing it into action through the medium of a human soul. The plan was carried into effect, and the mysterious person thus formed appears for the first time to our view, in the extraordinary boy, whom we left sitting in the temple, an object of wonder, which must have been almost boundless, since the power which was manifesting itself in him was unknown. We have now in the succeeding chapters of this book, to follow the circumstances and events of his remarkable history.

Before we proceed however, we have a few things of a practical character to say, which are suggested by this subject.

1. A young Christian may derive great advantage, and enjoy much pleasure in studying the character of God on the principles of this chapter. I do not mean by reading books on the subject, but by making your own observations and reflections upon the scene and the objects around you. There are certain highly wrought contrivances, such as the eye, and the hand, which were long since exhibited as proofs of divine wisdom, and they have been so exclusively dwelt upon by writers since, as almost to produce the impression upon those who read

passively, that these are all, or certainly the chief indications of divine wisdom. Whereas you cannot take a walk, or sit at an open window, without finding innumerable examples as unequivocal as these.

A young lady of active mind, who was out of health, and forbidden by her physician to read or study, and who complained that she did not know how to employ her thoughts, was advised by a friend to take a walk, and see how many proofs of divine contrivance she could find. Such an experiment, I would advise all my readers to try. With a very little ingenuity, they will succeed much better than they would imagine. Should any make the attempt, and reduce to writing the result of the observations made, the report might be perhaps somewhat as follows :

"From the yard of my father's house, I passed through a gate into the garden, intending to cross it and seek for my proofs of design, in the fields and wood beyond. As I passed along the walk, however, I observed several apples lying on the ground, under a tree. I took up one and found that it was ripe. I was thinking whether there was not design in the smooth tight skin by which the apple was covered, protecting it so fully from the rain, and thought that next spring, when the apples were about half formed, I would carefully pare one while it was on the tree, and then leave it, to see what effect the loss of its skin would have on its future growth.

"None but the ripe apples had fallen to the ground. It seems then that when the fruit has come to its maturity, it is so contrived as to let go its hold, and fall. There appears to be no natural connexion between the maturity of the fruit and the weakness of the stem precisely at its junction with the tree, particularly as the rest of the stem continues strong and sound as before.

"I *mellowed* one of the apples, as the boys term it, by

striking it rapidly against a smooth post, without however breaking the skin. Before, though it was not very hard, it was firm to the touch, but now it was soft and yielding. What change had I made in its interior? A ball of wood could not be thus softened by blows. I cut it open. The juice flowed out profusely. If I had cut it open just as it came from the tree, not a drop would have fallen to the ground. I concluded that the sweet liquid had been carefully put up in little cells, which composed the substance of the fruit, and which had safely retained it until my blows had broken them all away, so as to mingle their contents into one mass. I thought how busily the power of God was employed, every summer's day, in ten thousand orchards, carrying these juices into every tree, apportioning its proper share to every apple, and conveying each particle to its own minute, invisible cell.

"Just then I saw before me at a little distance, a cucumber vine, which had spread itself over the ground, and was clinging to every little sprig and pebble which came in its way. 'How can its little tendrils find what they wish to clasp?' thought I, as I stooped down to look at them. I observed that the tendrils which did not come into contact with any thing, were nearly or quite straight, though some of them had grown out to a considerable length. Every one however which touched any object, had curled towards it, and some had wound themselves round so many times, that they would break rather than relax their hold. How delicate must be the mechanism of fibres, so contrived that by the mere invitation of a touch, they should curl and grasp the object which is presented.

"While looking at this, and observing that the origin of the tendril in the stem of the vine, was always at the exact place where a support would be most effectual, I noticed a small bright drop, which assumed, as I slightly

The dew drop. Its supports. Highly finished work.

changed my position, bright hues of orange, green, blue, and violet. It was a drop of dew, which lay in a little indentation of the leaf. I was admiring the admirable exactness of its form, and the brilliancy of its polished surface, and wondering at the laws of cohesion and of light which could thus retain every particle in its precise position, and produce images so perfect, and yet so minute, as I saw reflected there,—when I accidentally touched the leaf, and the little world of wonders rolled away. The charm was broken at once; it vanished upon the wet ground as if it had not been. The spot upon the leaf, where it had been lying for hours was dry. Thousands of downy fibres, which God had fashioned there, had held it up, and similar fibres in countless numbers clothed every leaf and every stem and every tendril of the whole. I looked over the garden and was lost in attempting to conceive of the immense number of these delicately fashioned fibres, which the all pervading Deity had been slowly constructing there, during the months that had just gone by. And when I reflected that not only that garden, but the gardens and fields all around me,—the verdure of the whole continent,—of the whole earth,—of unnumbered worlds besides, was all as exquisitely finished as this, the mind shrunk back from the vain effort to follow out the reflection.*

But enough. Such a narrative might be continued indefinitely, and the young Christian who will actually go forth to study God's character in garden and forest and field, will find no end to his discoveries. And the very substances which are most common, and which he has been accustomed to look upon with the slightest interest, he will find teeming with the most abundant proofs of the Creator's benevolence and skill, and the boundless resources of his power. Take for instance, water, which, as it lies before us in a bowl, appears as simple,

and as little mechanical in its structure, as any thing can possibly be; and yet weeks would not be sufficient to describe its wonders. See it now gliding in a smooth gentle current to the ocean, over golden sands, enchaining us for hours upon its banks, to gaze upon its rippling surface, and into its clear depths,—and now rolling in the billows of the ocean, which toss, with terrific power, the proudest structures that men can frame, as easily as they do the floating sea-weed. Again it assumes an invisible form, and the same particles, under a different law, float imperceptible in the atmosphere, or by their almost resistless repulsion, work the mightiest engines which man can construct. The Protean substance again appears to us in the form of a light fleecy cloud, sailing in the clear blue sky. And what is a cloud? It presents only a surface of whiteness to the eye: but it is composed of countless drops, turned to their true spherical form with mathematical precision, and gently descending through the air, as fast as their superior weight can find its way. Every fleecy cloud is in fact a shower, with drops smaller indeed than those of rain, and descending more slowly, and consumed by the warm air below them, before they reach the earth. If we could see the gradual formation and dissipation of such a drop, as particle after particle comes to increase it, or flies away, we should see the operation of the Deity; and when we think how many clouds and storms sweep over the sky, every minute globule of which must be formed under the hand of God, we shall see how boundlessly multiplied are the operations of his hands.

But the half is not yet told. Come out in the snow-storm, and after surveying the vast extent of country buried in its white wintry covering, look up into the sky, and estimate, if you can, the millions of descending flakes. Every one of these flakes, countless as they are, is formed and fashioned after its proper model. It is crys-

talized in a precise form, every particle takes its precise place, every point of the beautiful star has its proper acuteness, and although in an hour a southern rain is to melt and destroy them all, still not one is neglected, not one is slighted, but every individual flake, of all the millions, is fashioned with as much exactness and care as if it was expressly intended for the examination of the chymist or philosopher. Now think of the vast fields of snow which whiten the arctic regions,—think of the eternal storms which sweep the polar skies, and which follow the retreating sun every season, far down towards his own peculiar climes, and conceive, if you can, the extent of the work, which the all pervading Deity has continually to do.

There is then no end to the forms which this simple substance assumes, in the changes through which the Deity carries it. I will mention one more, because it illustrates peculiarly the idea that the most common objects are the most extraordinary, if we really look at them with an observing eye. It is the bubble; one of the most surprising things in nature, and yet one at which nobody ever thinks of being surprised.

In order that we may examine it more conveniently, let us imagine it to be enlarged, for it is plain that its character does not depend at all upon its size. Imagine it then to be enlarged; suppose one, twenty feet in height, were to stand before you. What a magnificent dome! Pure, transparent, glistening in the sun, and irised by a thousand hues, which float and wave and spread in graceful and ceaseless motion on its surface! And yet this dome is built, by its architect, of what? Of marble blocks, fitted into one another with the care which man must exercise to construct his arch or dome? Of iron bars to strengthen the sides and sustain the summit? No: but of fluid particles, which glide and swim among each other, as if they had no connexion

whatever. They are bound together, firmly and exactly balanced, and yet with such admirable skill, that every one is free to float and move where it will. The edifice is so strong, that if a heavy body falls upon it, it either glides down its side, or cleaves its summit; and the magic structure safely withstands the shock. It regains in an instant its form, as true, as symmetrical and as perfect as before; and yet, stable as it thus is, every stone in the edifice is in motion, and glides gracefully, and at perfect liberty, among the rest. It is indeed a wonder. The laws of reflection and cohesion and equilibrium, which every bubble brings into play, it would require a volume to elucidate, and yet the mighty operator, seeming to find pleasure in endless occupation, dashes them out in the utmost perfection, under every waterfall; by means of them he surmounts every one of the countless waves of ocean with its snowy crest, and whitens a hundred thousand miles of sandy beach and rocky shore, with a perpetual fringe of foam.

But after all, innumerable and wonderful as are these works of the Deity, these modes of acting out his attributes, there are far more interesting manifestations of his character. For, exciting and animating as are such glimpses as these of the workings of the Almighty, it is only such attributes as skill, power, taste, invention, which are brought into view by them. They are most striking exhibitions it is true, but they are exhibitions of cold intellect only, after all. The splendor of the evening sky, the sublimity of a tempest, the exquisite delicacy of structure which we see in microscopic plants and animals, affect us strongly, but it is little more than a philosophical interest in a power and a skill, so infinitely varied in its designs, and so admirable in its execution.

But you can go much farther than this, you can examine even in nature, the *moral* exhibitions of God's

character, and as we pass from these examples of mere mechanism, to those which exhibit to us the moral feelings of the being who performs these works, our hearts are touched. I will take, to illustrate this, one of the lowest examples of what I mean.

It is June. We walk out in some retired and uninhabited region, in the midst of the forests, and find all nature thronged with active and happy life. Insects unnumbered sport in the sun, or skip upon the bright surface of the lake. Nimble animals chase one another upon the branches of the trees, or hide in hollow trunks, or gather nuts and fruits which fall around them, in inexhaustible profusion. And what is all this for? Perhaps for hundreds of miles around, there is not a human habitation; no human eye will witness this scene, and no human want will be supplied by any thing it produces. What is it for? What motive induces these efforts? Why, it is because this mighty architect whose power is so great, and whose field is so boundless, loves to exercise that power in every corner of that wide spread field, for the purpose of producing enjoyment. No person can look on such a scene, with any thing like proper views of it, without feeling a glow of new interest and warmer attachment towards its mighty Author. The mere proofs of power and contrivance and skill, in the specimens of mechanism which have been noticed, awaken strong intellectual interest;—but it touches the heart, and awakens a deeper and warmer emotion there, when we see this architect, while actually carrying on the mighty mechanism of the heavens, still busily engaged in this secluded valley, filling thousands and millions of his creatures with enjoyment, as if taking pleasure in witnessing the frolics of an insect; and drawing so copiously upon his stores of skill and power, to make a squirrel or a robin happy.

The robin; just look for a moment at his nest in the

midst of this valley of peace. It is fixed securely in a cluster of branches, sheltered just enough by the foliage around, and in it are three or four tender, helpless, unfledged birds lying together. The open air and the broad sky is over their heads; nothing but the hanging leaf protects them from an enemy. They have no power to fly, no power to resist; hunger is coming on and they cannot provide food; but they lie alone and helpless and weak, the very picture of defencelessness and exposure.

But they are safe and happy. God makes them his care. They cannot bear cold; God has guarded them against it, by so poising the ponderous earth, and so carefully regulating its motions, that no nipping frost, and no storm of snow can possibly come to desolate their little dwelling. They cannot defend themselves from violence or escape from it. True; and God has so regulated the instincts and propensities of the millions of living things around them, that they shall be exposed to none. They cannot provide themselves with food, and it will take but very few hours to bring them to excruciating suffering unless they are supplied. But they will be supplied. God has sent out his messengers to provide for them. One flies from tree to tree in a distant part of the forest, and the other perhaps hops upon the shore of the brook or pond. The trees around them are filled with thousands of other birds, alluring them by their songs, and brighter vales and more shady trees invite them to stay. But no. God has bound them to one another; and to their helpless young, by a mechanism, as incomprehensible as it is beautiful in its results. It allows them to fly freely and unfettered as they choose, but it retains its indissoluble hold wherever they go. No song of a stranger will make them forget one another; no other nest will lead them to forget their own; no sunny bank or shady grove will have charms enough to detain them; but faithful to their trust they toil industriously through the day, and unless

death or violence keep them away, they will be ready with their supply, when at night their helpless young open their mouths and cry for food. We cannot comprehend the admirable mechanism by which these results are secured, but we love the character which our Father manifests in securing them.

But let us change the scene. It is January, and we walk out into the same forest, and look upon the same stream which in summer was the scene of so much life and activity and happiness. How changed! Where are the insects now, which sported in the sunbeams, on the glassy surface of the water? That surface is still more glassy now,— solid and cold,— and over it scud the dry wreaths of snow before the bleak wind. Where are now the thousand forms of happy life, which enlivened every bank and fluttered from flower to flower? Alas! sunny bank and gay flower, and verdant turf are gone! The deep snow clothes the whole surface of the ground, covering every smaller plant, and rising around the naked trunks of the tall trees,—hanging in wreaths over the banks, and fast accumulating, as the driving wintry storm brings on fresh supplies from God's inexhaustible treasuries. Where is that happy home among the branches of the tree? The leaves which sheltered it are gone, a mass of drifting snow marks the spot where the desolate and forsaken habitation remains, and the cold dreary wind whistles through the naked branches around.

We must remember too, that it is not in this one spot alone, that this change, and this apparent exhaustion of life has taken place. For thousands of miles, in almost every direction, in June, life and activity and enjoyment were as abundant as in this little dell, and now over all this wide extent winter has spread her reign of desolation and death. Has God left, is a very natural inquiry, has God left all these millions of his creatures to be overwhelmed with destruction?

The winter home. The Chrysalis. The ant.

No; scarcely one. He has secured and protected them all. Never did the most cautious husbandman lay in his stores, and prepare his clothing, and secure the warmth and tightness of his buildings with half the efficiency of foresight and care which God exhibits every autumn, in shutting up, in places of safety and protection, all the varieties of animal and vegetable life. The storm and the wintry cold are not allowed to come till he has given maturity and strength to the helpless birds, and sent them away to warmer climes. Other animals have, in obedience to an impulse of which they could not know the nature and design, been industriously employed during the summer, in laying in their winter stores; and are now sheltered in holes, or hollow trunks, sleeping undisturbed in the midst of a plenty which God has provided for them. Even the insect tribes, so delicate and frail, are all safe. By a most admirable arrangement, generation succeeds generation in such a way, that the animal life of a whole species exists in such a form at the approach of winter, that ice and cold and snow can produce neither injury nor pain. In these and in other ways, God has secured for all, protection, and exemption from suffering, and when the first wintry midnight storm roars through the forest, it finds every thing prepared for it. Every nest is empty, and its inmates are safe in another clime. All insect existence is protected, and the field mouse, and even the little ant, are carefully housed in their warm and sheltered and plentiful home.

By such examinations as these, of God's works, we see that he is Love; that he is not merely a cold contriver, exhibiting in his works mechanical skill and power alone, but that he has feelings of affection, that he is susceptible of strong personal interest and attachment. It gives us great intellectual gratification to look at the exhibitions of his mere invention and power, but it touches our hearts, and awakens a deep and warm feeling

there, when we see this skill and power brought into requisition to secure the protection and happiness of even the lowest creatures he has formed. The inference is irresistible, that he who takes so much pains to bring to every unfledged robin or sparrow its daily supplies of food, cannot be indifferent to our protection and happiness. We must be of more value than many sparrows.

In studying the character however of the great unseen Power which pervades the universe, you must not look exclusively at those kind and gentle aspects of it, which we have been exhibiting. God is a magistrate as well as a father. It is the part of a magistrate to act on system, and to be firm and decided in sustaining system and law. Plans must be formed with reference to the general good, and these plans must be steadily pursued, even at the occasional expense of great individual suffering. The wider the field, the more extensive the community, and more lasting and momentous the interests involved, the greater is the necessity of this determined firmness on the part of the magistrate upon whom the responsibility devolves. If now you wish to make out for yourself a Deity such as may suit your own weakness or timidity, you will pass over this part of God's character; but if you wish for truth,—if you really wish to understand what sort of a Power it is that holds the reins of government over us all, you will not allow this aspect of his character to pass unexamined.

Wherever we look then, whether to nature or revelation, or to that more distinct manifestation of his character which the invisible Supreme has made to us in the person of Jesus Christ, we shall find the most overwhelming, and sometimes appalling proofs, that God acts upon system;—that he has planned a system, both of physical and moral law, with reference to the greatest good of the greatest number, and that this system he will sustain, with the most determined and persevering

decision. I shrink from coming to this part of my subject. Many of my readers, without doubt, who have followed me with all their hearts, in the pictures of God's character which have been exhibited so far, will hang back reluctant from what remains. But we must know the whole. We must endeavor to understand fully the character of the great Being with whom we have to do.

If then we look at the manifestations of Jehovah's character which he has made, and is making, in nature all around us, you will find, as I said above, that he acts upon system, and that he will pursue the plan which public good requires, firmly and efficiently, even at the expense of great individual suffering. Let me first illustrate this, in regard to a mere physical law.

You are studying God's character, I will suppose, in what you see of his works, and as you pass by some usually quiet and happy dwelling, your attention is attracted by piercing cries from within, apparently coming from a child and indicating acute suffering. You enter to ascertain the cause, and find that a little infant, just learning to delight its parents' hearts by its opening faculties of speech and reason, has fallen into the fire, and is dreadfully burned. The poor child cries piteously, and extends its arms to its parents for relief. It has never before known a pain which they could not either relieve or mitigate, and its look of anguish seems to upbraid them for not rescuing it now. Its agonized parents, suffering even more than the child, look this way and that for help, but in vain. The injury is too deep to be repaired. Hour after hour, nay day after day, the intense suffering continues, until fever and delirium close the sad scene.

Close it, did I say? No. The child sleeps, but memory does not sleep in the breast of its half-distracted mother. For weeks and months her eyes will fill with tears, and her heart will almost burst, as she looks upon

the deserted little cradle, or the now useless toy. Those heart rending cries and dying struggles are perpetuated in her mind by faculties which God has planted there; and the recollection will for months and years haunt her by day, and terrify her in her midnight dreams.

All this follows from the accident of a moment, for which no one was to blame. There is but one Power in existence who could stop these consequences, after the recurrence of the cause. And will he do it? Will he interpose and stop the torture, and heal the wound, and bring relief and happiness once more to the distracted family? Or will he remain calmly by, leaving the laws of matter and of mind to work out in such a case their awful consequences to the full?

The question does not need an answer. He has established laws in regard to the nature and effects of fire upon the human frame, and the connexion of bodily injury with bodily suffering, and the principles which regulate the movements of the human heart, which he sees are best on the whole. These laws he has established. He sees that it is best that they should be liable to no exceptions and no uncertainty in their course, and he accordingly *will carry them through.* Men sometimes exhibit firmness and decision in carrying out a plan, which is on the whole for the best; but if we will look around us at the works of Providence, which invite our examination on every side, we shall see that God does not hesitate to go, in the execution of his laws, where the firmest and most decided men would shrink from following.

Perhaps some persons may object to such a view of our Maker's character; but if they do, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that it is the character itself that they object to, and not to any thing peculiar in this mode of exhibiting it. These are facts which I have been exhibiting, not theories. They are common facts

too, that is, the transaction I have described not unfrequently occurs, exactly as I have described it, and it is moreover a fair specimen of thousands and tens of thousands of occurrences which are precisely analogous to it in their nature, and which are constantly taking place in the view of every observer. Nor can there be any doubt of the explanation I have given. That God has ordained these general laws no one can doubt or deny. That he might arrest or suspend their operation in individual cases if he was inclined to do so, is equally unquestionable; and his allowing them to work their way through so much misery, is proof clear and undeniable as demonstration, that though he loves happiness and is planning continually to secure it for millions and millions of his creatures, he can still firmly and steadily witness individual suffering, when necessary, and that he will do it, rather than sacrifice the general good by violating law.

You will see this still more clearly and its effects are still more terrible, in regard to the operations of moral law. I mean law relating to the moral conduct of men. If you really wish to know what God's actual character is, as he exhibits it in what he does, you will take special interest in observing what he does in cases of guilt.

On the side of a bleak and barren hill half a mile from the village in which you reside, stands a miserable house, or rather hovel, which has often attracted your attention in your walks, by its ruinous and dilapidated condition, and the pale, sickly, wretched children which shiver at the door. Did you ever consider what sort of a scene its interior usually presents, at night? Come with me and see.

The inner door hanging by a single hinge opens creakingly, and the cold, empty, miserable apartment, presents to you an expression of wretchedness far more gloomy than even the exterior had led you to expect. The sickly, worn out wife and mother is trying in vain

to make out, from former remnants, some food for herself and her half-starved children. They sit around the room, or hover over the embers, in a half stupor. They do not cry. The extreme of misery is silent, and these wretched ones are beyond tears. She is hurrying through her work to get them away from an approaching danger. What is that danger, which she does not dare that they should meet with her? Why their *father* is coming home. If it was the lightning, or a tornado, or a midnight assassin, she would gather her children around her, and they would feel safer and happier together. But their father is coming home, and the uncontrollable passions of an insane husband and father, she chooses to bear alone. She sends her children away. She hides her babe in the most secret place she can find;—an emaciated, shivering boy spreads over him the thin covering which is all that is left, and draws himself up, as if he was trying to shrink away from cold;—and perhaps a girl, by a choice of miseries, has pleaded for permission to stay with her mother.

All this is however the mere prelude,—the preparation, anticipating the scene of real misery which the return of the abandoned husband and father is to bring. But here I must stop; for if I were to describe the scene which ensues, just as it is actually exhibited in thousands and ten thousands of families all over England and America, every night, my readers would lay down the book, sick at heart, at the contemplation of the guilt and miseries of man.

But the point I am wishing to bring to your view in all this case, is this. How firmly and steadily will Jehovah go on, night after night, for months and years, and allow the wretched sinner in this case to drink all the bitter dregs of the cup he chooses, and to bring down its dreadful effects upon his helpless wife and children. Nay we

may go further back. For all this misery is primarily caused by a poison which another man supplies; he deals it out a daily potion of death, and while his own head is sheltered, and his own fireside safe from its effects, he is permitted by Providence to go on for years, sending these streams of misery into many families all around him. Why does not God interpose to stop this vice and suffering? Why does he not shelter this wretched wife, and warm and feed these perishing but innocent children?—innocent at least, of the causes of their misery. Why does he not by a change in the constitution of nature destroy the possiblity of making a poison so excruciating in its effects? There can be but one answer. He sees that it is on the whole for the best, that man should be left free to sin if he will, and that the nature of sin should be shown by allowing it to work out undisturbed its own awful results to all connected with the sinner. These plans of his government he has the firmness to carry out,—though every year they cut down thousands of wretched wives and starved children. The man who chooses to send firebrands, arrows and death around him, has under the government of God an opportunity to do so. The door is wide open. And the helpless and innocent wife and children must take the consequences. But oh, thou forlorn and broken-hearted mother, be of good courage. Thou art not forgotten, though fixed laws must take their course. Thou shalt have a hearing in due time.

Such cases as the above, are rather cases of moral arrangements carried out firmly to their end, than examples of the execution of the penalties of a moral law. I do not bring forward cases of the latter kind, because they are familiar to every one, and most certainly if God does not shrink from individual suffering, when it is

necessary to sustain the uniformity of material processes, or to carry out the moral operations of his general system, who can imagine that he will fail in the energy of his government in regard to the consequences of personal guilt. The Bible speaks on this subject in language so terrible that men shrink from repeating it; but nature speaks all around us more emphatically and more terribly still.*

As I have already remarked, it would not be surprising if some of my readers were to shrink back from these views of the determined decision which God manifests in carrying out to the end, all these arrangements which he has once deliberately adopted for the ultimate good of all. We cannot deny, however, that the history of God's dealings with men is full of such examples as we have presented, and that if we really and honestly wish to know what is his character and what principles do really govern his conduct, such cases deserve a most attentive consideration. He who wishes to frame for himself an imaginary Deity, suited to his own limited views and narrow conceptions, will probably shut his eyes against them. We however wish to know the truth, whatever it may be, and if we attempt to study God's character as it is exhibited in those manifestations of himself which he makes in his daily providence, we shall find everywhere inscribed in blazing characters, UNBOUNDED POWER AND SKILL; UNIVERSAL AND INEXTINGUISHABLE LOVE; AND INFLEXIBLE FIRMNESS IN THE EXECUTION OF LAW.

* We must not suppose from these facts, that the Deity is guided, in the government of the world, by general laws, which, though on the whole useful and salutary, are, in individual cases, mischievous and only to be tolerated because they effect, on the whole, more good than evil. These laws of nature, even in those cases where, to the eye of man, they produce nothing but evil, are in reality as truly intended and calculated to produce good, as in the other cases where the good is manifest and direct.

We have thus far exhibited the mode by which you are to study the character of our great Magistrate and Father, by his acts; and this mode of study, you will observe, is essentially the same, whether you read the record of his acts contained in the Bible, or observe them in the histories of nations and individuals, or in the occurrences of common life. All these however constitute but one mode by which the Deity manifests himself to men. There are two others which I must briefly allude to here, though they will be more fully brought to view in the future chapters of this work.

The second great manifestation of the Deity which is made to us, is in the exertion of a direct power upon the human heart. In all ages of the world, there have been remarkable exceptions to the prevailing selfishness and sin which generally reign among mankind. These exceptions occur in the earliest history contained in the Bible; and were it not for the light which Christianity throws upon the subject, they would be almost unaccountable. Cain and Abel, for example, took entirely different courses in reference to their duties towards God. Love, gratitude, and reverence seem to have reigned in the heart of one, while a cold, heartless, and selfish worship was all that the other rendered. Here is an extraordinary difference among beings of the same species, possessing the same native powers and propensities, and placed in substantially the same circumstances.

Noah listened to the warning voice of God, while all the rest of the world gave themselves up to sin. Why should this be so? Worldly pleasure, we might have supposed, would have been as alluring to him as to others, and the disposition to obey and fear their Maker as strong in others as in him. But it was not so. He stood alone; and how shall the moral phenomenon of his solitary virtue amidst universal degeneracy and vice, be explained?

So in a multitude of other cases. The narratives with which the Old Testament is filled seem designed to exhibit to us contrasts. A few individuals, with hearts filled with filial affection towards God, form the bright parts of the picture, and the natural character of selfishness and sin, acting in different circumstances, but in all, working out the same bitter fruits, exhibit abundantly the darker shades. Why should this be so? Why should Abraham find in himself a willingness to obey God, and to deal kindly and justly with man, while ungodliness, injustice and cruelty reigned almost all around him. Why was Joseph pure and spotless,—conscientious, just and forgiving? His brothers were men of violence and blood. Why, in *such* a family should there be *such* an exception?

Similar examples have been always occurring and the Bible exhibits them as the effects of a peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit, as it is termed, upon the human heart. A mysterious operation, powerful in its results, but incomprehensible in its nature. This you will observe is a manifestation of the Divinity entirely different from those to which we have already alluded. In the works of creation and Providence, Jehovah himself acts, and from the nature of his actions we learn his character. In his direct power over moral agents, he mysteriously mingles his influences with their moral powers, so as to lead *them* to act, and by the character of the results, we likewise in this case learn his character. They are however two modes of manifesting the powers and character of the Deity, which are very dissimilar.

This class of moral effects are not only in the Bible ascribed to an influence from above, but they have always been so attributed by the individuals themselves. Good men, in all ages, have always understood, and have been eager to acknowledge their dependence upon a higher power, for all that is good in their hearts They

have differed exceedingly in their modes of expressing it, but they have agreed substantially as to the fact. It has always been easy for an antagonist to run them into difficulty and perplexity in defending the opinion; still they have clung unceasingly to it; or returned to it again and again when torn away; and go where you will, among mankind, wherever you find holiness of heart, and real moral virtue, you will find their possessor ascribing them to a mysterious but all powerful influence from above. It is so with the refined and cultivated intellect in the most elevated christian community, and it is so with the humblest, lowest savage that ever bowed before his Maker to confess and to abandon his sins. It was so in former times with David and with Paul, and it is so now with every lonely widow, who, in God finds consolation and even happiness in the midst of her tears; and with every sick child, who, renewed by the Holy Spirit, finds such peace with God that he can smile at death, and welcome the grave.

A more full consideration of this subject we must reserve: we only allude to it here, in order to bring distinctly forward in its place, the fact that there is this, among the other modes, by which the great unseen power manifests himself to men.

There is one other; which we have already alluded to,—that more direct and personal exhibition of himself which God has made in Jesus Christ his son. Here God, for the first time, shows himself to men, openly and without a veil. Here we see the moral attributes of divinity in living and acting reality. In those other manifestations of himself which he has made, "we see through a glass darkly, but here face to face." When he acts in his providence, or in the mysterious and secret agency of his Spirit in human hearts, we must pause and reflect, in order to come to conclusions; we must trace back causes to effects, and infer the principles which

must have guided them. But when the great unseen assumes our own human nature, when he becomes flesh, and dwells among us, his attributes and perfections come out into open day.

Such are the three great manifestations of himself to men, which the one Unseen all-pervading essence has made, as exhibited to us in the Bible, and in our own experience and observation. Though there have been interminable disputes in the Christian church about the language which has been employed to describe these facts, there has been comparatively little dispute among even nominal Christians about the facts themselves. I have endeavored in describing them to go just as far as the Bible goes, and no farther, and to use as nearly as possible the expressions which are furnished us in that sacred volume.

These views, my readers will perceive, open a very wide field to be explored in studying the character of God. Many young persons, when they hear of this study, form no idea of any thing more than committing to memory a few passages of scripture, or learning by rote the summary views of some theological writer. But you see that all nature and all revelation, the whole field of observation, and of experience, and all the records of history are full of materials. Go then, and take no man's opinions upon trust, but study the character of God for yourselves by seeing what he does.

There is one thing more to be said, before I close this chapter. Many persons feel a difficulty in determining how to approach the Deity in prayer. "What conception," you ask, "shall we form, of the Being whom we address?"

The unseen Divinity itself, in its purely spiritual form, we cannot conceive of; they who attempt to do it will find on a careful analysis of the mental operation, that it

is the visible universe itself, that they picture to their minds, when in prayer they endeavor to form an abstract conception of the Deity which pervades it. Others in imagination look upward, and form a confused and an absurd idea of a monarch on a throne of marble and gold, with crown and sceptre, and sitting in a fancied region which they call heaven. This is a delusion which we have already endeavored to dispel. Driven from this imagination, the soul roams throughout the universe among suns and stars, or over the busy surface of the earth, seeking in vain for some conceivable image of the Deity, some form on which the thoughts can rest, and towards which the feelings can concentrate. It looks however in vain. God manifests himself indeed in the blazing sun, the fiery comet,—and in the verdure and bloom of the boundless regions of the earth; but these are not the avenues through which a soul burdened with its sins, would desire to approach its Maker. The gospel solves the difficulty. "It is by Jesus Christ that we have access to the Father." This vivid exhibition of his character, this personification of his moral attributes opens to us the way. Here we see a manifestation of divinity, AN IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD which comes as it were down to us; it meets our feeble faculties with a personification exactly adapted to their wants, so that the soul when pressed by the trials and difficulties of its condition, when overwhelmed with sorrow, or bowed down by remorse, or earnestly longing for holiness, will pass by all the other outward exhibitions of the Deity, and approach the invisible supreme, through that manifestation of himself which he has made in the person of Jesus Christ, his son, our Saviour.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN CHRIST JESUS.

"Leaving us an example that ye should walk in his steps."

THE very first words of our Savior, which have been preserved for us, contain an expression of the great leading principle, which regulated his whole life. "*I must be about my Father's business.*" His last words, too, show, that thirty years of fatigue, and danger, and suffering, did not extinguish his zeal in this his work. "*Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" He came into the world to do something, not for himself, but for his Father, and he devoted himself to it entirely. He was continually engaged in it himself, while he remained here, going from place to place, encountering hardship and danger and suffering, and all without any reference to his own selfish interests, but regarding solely the work he had to do for the salvation of men. And at last, when he left the world, his final charge to his disciples was, that they should be faithful and persevering in carrying forward this work.

In fact he was so entirely devoted to his Father's business, that half the readers of his life do not imagine, that he had any of his own. But we must not forget, that he was *a man*, with all the feelings, and exposed to all the temptations of men. He might have formed the scheme of being a Napoleon, if he had chosen. The world was before him. He had the opportunity, and so far as we can understand the mysterious description of his temptation, he was urged to make the attempt.

It is surprising how much the example of Christ loses its power over us, simply on account of the absolute perfection of it. If he had been partly a lover of pleasure, if he had for instance built himself a splendid man-

sion, and ornamented his grounds, and devoted some portion of his time to selfish enjoyment there; or if he had entered into political life, and devoted a share of his attention to promoting his own honor, and yet if he had torn himself away from these temptations, so as finally to have devoted his chief time and attention to the glory of God and the good of men, than we should have felt, that the example was within our reach. The selfish and worldly spirit, which he would have exhibited, would, as it were, have made his case come home to us, and whatever fidelity and zeal he might have shown in his work, would have allured us to an imitation of it. But as it is, since he gave himself up *wholly* to his duty, since he relinquished the world altogether, Christians seem to think, that his bright example is only, to a very limited extent, an example for them. But we must remember, as I said above, that Jesus Christ was a man. His powers were human powers. His feelings were human feelings, and his example is strictly and exactly an example for all the world. Still nobody considers him a fair example; at least very few do. Most Christians think, that the general principles, which regulate his conduct, ought to regulate theirs, but then the most they think of doing is to follow in his steps slowly and hesitatingly, and at a great distance behind.

And there is nothing in which the example of Christ takes less hold of men, than in this leading principle of his conduct, — devotedness to his Father's business. How perfectly evident it is, that a very large proportion of professing Christians are doing their own business in this world, and not their Father's. In fact so universal is this sin, that there are great numbers of nominal Christians, who have no idea, no conception whatever, of the ground which Christianity takes in regard to a man's duty. It stands strikingly distinct from every other religion. Mahometanism leaves men to pursue

their own objects,— to live for themselves,— only it prescribes some rules regulating the modes, by which these aims shall be pursued. So does paganism,— so did ancient philosophy,— so does modern infidelity. Whatever moral rules all these prescribe, are rules to regulate pursuits, whose nature and objects remain unchanged. But Christianity does no such thing. It comes with far higher claims,— it is no mere regulator of the machinery of human life. It comes to change the plan and object of that machinery altogether.

Look at the history of a man engrossed in the world. He saw when he was young, that wealth gave consideration and influence to its possessor, and he felt a feverish sort of pleasure, when he received the first hundred dollars which he earned. He resolved to become rich, and in his eagerness to go on, he gradually became less and less scrupulous about the means of advancing. He violated no laws; he exposed himself to no public disgrace, but he resorted to those means so well known to men of the world, by which he could increase his own stores at the expense of the rights or the happiness of others; and by these means he has at length acquired a fortune. He usually attends public worship on the Sabbath. It would be disreputable not to do so. But in the morning and evening, at his own private apartment, he will post his books, or look over his accounts, or plan his voyages. There is nothing disreputable in this.

He is not a profane man;—not at all, in his own opinion. It is true, that sometimes, when excited, he will make use of what he acknowledges to be an improper expression, but men will make allowances for this. He does not do it to such an extent as to injure his character.

He does not worship God in his family. He has no particular objection to religion, but he has no taste for it; and then, besides, he has not time. In order to carry on

his plans, it is necessary for him to go early to his counting room, and at night he is fatigued and exhausted, and wishes to rest. As to the answer he shall make, when, at last, God shall summon him to account for the immortal soul intrusted to him, he never thinks of it. Still he is not entirely devoid of all sense of accountability. He would not for the world have a note fall due, without looking forward to the time, and being prepared for it. In fact, he plans very wisely. His object is to make a fortune, and he is taking a most judicious and successful course. It is no part of his design to please God, or to do good to man;—to save his own soul, or to prepare for a happy meeting with his children in heaven. This is not his business, and of course he does not attend to it.

As, however, he advances in life, he begins to think sometimes more seriously. His minister brings to his view an approaching judgment, and explains the strictness of God's law, so that his conscience begins to trouble him. He perceives that though his mode of life has been perfectly reputable among men, still it must be considered somewhat irregular when compared with God's law. His children begin to be ungovernable and dissipated as they grow up, and one of them comes, under very melancholy circumstances, to an untimely end. He is troubled. In short he resolves to reform. He banishes all business from the Sabbath except, that when the sermon does not particularly interest him, he cannot help sometimes thinking a little of his voyages or his sales. He becomes more scrupulous about infringing upon his neighbor's rights, or taking an unfair advantage of their necessities. He establishes morning and evening prayers in his family, and though he does not always think of the Being he is addressing, he always regularly addresses him, in words, and there is generally a feeling of reverence and awe, and a sort of vague impression on his mind, that he is really speaking

to the Supreme. He becomes a benevolent man too. That is, when an application is made for charity, he gives as much as he thinks will be expected of him.

In a word, there is a great change in his character. 'Tis true he is still pursuing the same great objects, but then Christianity has come in to regulate the mode of his pursuing them. And he goes on for the rest of his days, making his fortune on much better principles, and in much better ways, than in the early part of his life. Still, making his fortune is his business. The ultimate object for which he lives and acts is to get money into his possession. Every thousand dollars he obtains, he invests in the most safe and profitable mode he can command, and looks upon it as so much done,—accomplished. And when at last he comes to die, and on his death-bed looks over his past life, all the satisfaction he can have will be, in reflecting, that though making his fortune has been the object of his life, he has nevertheless made the last half of it, in the most unexceptionable manner.

Now is such a man a follower of Jesus Christ? Is making a fortune for himself his Father's business? No; when he appears before God in judgment, he must expect to be addressed thus, "Did you not know, that you were stationed on earth to do good; to turn men to God, to set an example of devoted attachment to his cause; to relieve suffering and promote human happiness, as the great objects of your life? All this was distinctly explained to you, and that you might perfectly understand it, you had the example of Jesus Christ, your Savior, who spent a life on earth in the most trying circumstances, for the very purpose of showing how much is meant by the command, that men should serve God while they live, and not themselves. You were distinctly and emphatically told, that you were not your own, that you had been bought with a price, and were bound to live and act as a steward, an agent, a servant. But

you have not done so. Instead of it, you have taken possession, in your own name, of the means of influence, and of usefulness, which were put into your hands to be used for God. You have had your trial, and it has resulted in your deliberate and final choice to act for yourself, and not for your Maker.

Let us look at another case. Samuel is a little boy, eight years old. He has really become a Christian, and wishes to do his duty, and his whole duty. Do you wish to know, Samuel, what it is? If you look into the Bible, to your Savior, for an example, you will see, that the first principle of action which he announced was, that he was doing his Father's business. But you remember, that he was sent from heaven to do a great work here, which you cannot do. "I cannot go," you say, "from place to place, preaching the gospel and working miracles, and giving sight to the blind, and healing the sick. I would if I could."

It is true you cannot do that. That is, you cannot do your Father's business in the same way precisely, that Christ did. Or, to explain it more fully, God has a great deal of business to be done in this world, and it is of various kinds, and the particular portion allotted to each person, depends upon the circumstances in which each one is placed. You cannot do exactly what Christ did while he was here, but you can do what he would have done had he been in your place. You cannot make a blind man happy, by restoring his sight, but you can make your little sister happy, by helping her up kindly when she has fallen down; and that last is your Father's business, as much as the other. His business here is to make every one happy, and to relieve every one's suffering. You cannot persuade great multitudes of men to love and obey God, as Christ endeavored to, but you may lead your brothers and sisters to do it, by your silent influence and happy example. So you can

bear sufferings patiently, and take injuries meekly, and thus exhibit the character which God wishes to have prevail here. The light you thus let shine may be a feeble light, and it may illuminate only a narrow circle around you; but if it is the light of genuine piety, it will be in fact, the glory of God; and if it is your great object to let this light shine, you are about your Father's business, as truly as Jesus was, when he preached to the thronging multitude, or brought Lazarus from the tomb. Yes; if a little child is making it his great aim to do good, by making his parents, his brothers and sisters, and his playmates happy, for the sake of co-operating with God, he is following the example of Christ.

It is very difficult for an observer to tell whether an individual is acting for God or for himself. A Christian merchant, for instance, who feels, that he holds a stewardship, will be as industrious, as enterprising and as persevering in his plans as any other merchant. Only he acts as agent, while the other acts as principal. So a boy may be amiable and gentle and kind without any regard to God, or any desire to carry on *his* plans. But God sees very clearly, who is working for him, and who is not; and there is not one, and there never has been one, in any age, who, if he had been inclined to enter God's service, would not have found enough to do for him, had he been disposed to do it. The example of Jesus Christ in this respect is an example for all mankind. It is intended for universal imitation, and they who pass through life without imitating it, must find themselves condemned when they come to their account.

And how strange it is, that God should find so very few willing to do his business in this world. Even of those few, most, instead of entering into it, heart and soul, do just enough to satisfy what they suppose to be the expectations of their Christian brethren. A lady will spend her life, engrossed with such objects of interest as

new furniture, and fashionable dress, and the means of securing the admiration of others, for herself or her children. She thinks, for days and weeks, of procuring some new article of furniture, not for comfort or convenience, but for show, and when it comes she is pleased and delighted, as if one of the great objects of her existence had been accomplished. She spends hours upon the color or texture of a ribbon, which as soon as it is chosen, will begin to fade, and will soon fall into contempt and be rejected; or she pursues, month after month, and year after year, what she calls the pleasures of society, which pleasures are often a compound of pride, vanity, envy, jealousy and ill-will. Her husband all the time devotes himself to pursuits equally unworthy an immortal mind. They do some good accidentally, and call themselves Christians, but they seem to have no idea, that God has any work for them to do.

Has he work for them to do? Yes; there is a world to be restored to holiness and happiness, and he asks their help in doing it. He has put their children almost completely in their power, so that their eternal happiness might be almost certainly secured, and has given them connexions with society, of which they might avail themselves in working most efficiently for him. If they would take hold of this enterprise, they would have some elevated and ennobling object before them. They would see, one after another, those connected with them, returning to God. They would see their children growing up in piety. Every night, they would feel that they had been living for God, and whatever might be their difficulties, they would be relieved from all sense of responsibility and care. Instead of feeling gloomy and sad, as their children scattered from them, or were one by one removed by death, and as they themselves were gradually drawing towards the close of life, they would find their interest in their great business growing

Low pursuits. The arts and refinements of life.

stronger and stronger, as they approached the great change, which would bring them more directly into connexion with their Father. The offer, on the part of our Maker, to take us into his service, in this world, is the only plan, which can give human life any real dignity, or substantial value. Without it all human employments are insignificant, all pleasure is insipid, and life is a sterile waste, void of verdure or bloom. Without this, there is an entire disproportion between the lofty powers and capacities of human nature, and the low pursuits and worthless objects, which are before it in its present home. An immortal spirit, capable of thoughts, which explore the universe, and of feelings and desires reaching forward to eternity, spending life in seeing how many pieces of stamped metal it can get together! a mind made in the image of God, and destined to live as long as he, buried for years in thoughts about the size and beauty of a dwelling, which is all the time going to decay, or about the color and fashion of dress, or the hues and carvings of rose-wood or mahogany!

But let no one understand me to condemn the enjoyments which come to us through the arts and refinements of life. It is making these things the great object of existence,—it is the eager pursuit of them, as the chief business of life, which the example of our Savior and the principles of the gospel condemn. These arts and refinements are intended to add to human happiness. They will make the most rapid progress in those countries where Christianity most perfectly prevails. Jesus Christ had a taste for beauty, both of nature and art; he admired the magnificent architecture of the Temple, and deeply lamented the necessity of its overthrow, and his dress was at least of such a character, that the disposal of it was a subject of importance to the well-paid soldiers, who crucified him. Yes, the universal reign of Christianity will be the reign of taste and refinement and

the arts; but while the enjoyments of men will be increased in a tenfold degree from these and other sources, their hearts will be set far less on them, than they are now. They will be recreations by the way, to cheer and refresh those whose hearts are mainly bent on accomplishing the objects of their Father in Heaven.

I have dwelt longer, perhaps, on this subject than I ought to have done. This book, though its subject is Christian truth, is intended to throw as strong a light as possible on Christian duty, and in considering this the first great trait of our Savior's character which presents itself to view, I could not avoid asking my reader to pause a moment to consider what he himself is really living for.

But let us return to the example of our Savior.

Jesus Christ was in some respects the most bold, energetic, decided and courageous man that ever lived; but in others he was the most flexible, submissive and yielding; and in the conceptions which many persons form of his character, there is a degree of indistinctness and confusion, from want of clear ideas of the mode in which these seemingly opposite qualities come together. The explanation is this. The question, which of these two classes of qualities he would exhibit, depended entirely upon the question, whether it was his own personal welfare or his Father's business, which was at stake. If it was the latter, he feared no danger, he shrunk from no opposition, and no obstacle or difficulty would turn him from his course. If it was the former, his own personal welfare, he was exactly the reverse, — mild, gentle, yielding, to such a degree, that, at first view, it would seem impossible, that it could be the same man. There never was a mission or an enterprise of any kind, conducted with a more bold, energetic, fearless spirit, than the Savior's mission; and on the other hand, there never

was a case where personal sacrifices and injuries were borne with so much indifference and unconcern. Observe how he reproved the insincere and dishonest pretenders to religion, which filled Judea in those days. He followed them into crowds, he met them face to face, and in the most direct and personal manner, spread out their insincerity and hypocrisy before them. Yes, in the midst of Jerusalem, the very heart and centre of their influence, he brought forward his accusations against them, with a power and severity which human eloquence has very seldom equalled. This was in the cause of his Father. But when it came to his own, how changed. Peter's most unmanly and ungrateful denial, was reproved by *a look!* And Judas, coming at midnight with armed men, to seize him by the basest treachery, was called to a sense of his guilt, by the mildest, the very gentlest reproof which language could frame. So when the profanation of his Father's temple was to be stopped, he could use a scourge, and effect a forcible ejectment with almost military authority, and yet when, as was shown afterwards in the judgment hall, there was nothing to excite him but his own personal injuries, he was meek and gentle as a lamb. He was equally ready to *use* the scourge, in the cause of God, and to *submit* to it in his own.

And this principle is the key to his whole conduct. Many anecdotes might be given to illustrate it. One day, for example, when speaking in the midst of Priests and Levites, in the very seat of their power, he told the story of the good Samaritan. Nothing could be more keenly cutting or more bold than this. They hated the Samaritans, because they would not come to Jerusalem to worship, and were proud of their own piety, because their worship was offered *in the right place!* Jesus did not enter into any labored argument with them, to show that piety was a business of the heart, and not of geo-

graphical location; he simply told them the story,—cutting as it did, exactly across their bitterest prejudices; they would not even have any dealings with the Samaritans.

Some time afterwards, he came in contact with the same feeling again, though in a different way. He was travelling with his disciples, and on arriving at Samaria, they would not receive him, because he *was going to Jerusalem.* Here the prejudice between the rival sects only injured *him*, personally. And he thought and cared nothing about it. His disciples were angry, but he quieted them at once, and went on. Thus it was always with him. Yielding, submissive, patient in regard to his own personal injuries and sufferings, but firm, inflex ible and courageous in the extreme, in resisting every injury to the cause committed to his care.

There is something very bold and energetic in the measures he adopted in accomplishing his work. The great business which it was necessary for him to effect before his crucifixion, was, to publish effectually through out Judea, his coming, and the principles of his gospel, —and to exhibit, as publicly as possible, the miraculous evidences of his mission. He did it in the most effectual manner, in about three years. In fact, there perhaps never was so great a moral effect produced in three years, on any so extensive a community, if we consider at all the disadvantages incident to the customs of those days. There was no press, no modes of extensive written communication, no regularly organized channels of intercourse whatever, between the different portions of the community. He acted under every disadvantage and availed himself of no miraculous modes of disseminating his principles; but yet, so skilfully did he plan, and with such promptness and energy did he execute, that in a very short period the work was done.

What were these plans? In the first place he went himself, directly and boldly, into every centre of influence

and population he could find. When Jerusalem was crowded with the multitudes, which came together at the Passover, he was always there, in the most public and conspicuous places, exposing, in the most explicit and direct manner, the sins of the times, and exhibiting the principles of true religion, with a distinctness and vividness and beauty, which have never been equalled. At other times, he was travelling from place to place, through fertile and populous provinces, visiting the larger villages and towns, and gathering great multitudes around him in the open country. And yet though he was, in his business, thus bold and enterprising, he was in feeling, as we shall see more distinctly in the sequel, of a quiet and retiring spirit. He always withdrew at once from the crowd when his work was done. He sought solitude, he shrunk from observation; in fact almost the only enjoyment which he seemed really to love, was his lonely ramble at midnight, for rest and prayer. He spent whole nights thus, we are told. And it is not surprising, that after the heated crowds and exhausting labors of the day, he should love to retire to silence and seclusion, to enjoy the cool and balmy air, the refreshing stillness, and all the beauties and glories of midnight, among the solitudes of the Gallilean hills;—to find there happy communion with his Father, and to gather fresh strength for the labors and trials, that yet remained.

Another thing, which exhibits the boldness and enterprise, that characterized his plans for making an impression on the community, was the peculiarly new and original style of public speaking he adopted. It was sententious, brief, antithetic. Every sentence was loaded with meaning, and so concisely and energetically expressed, that the sentiment could neither be misunderstood nor forgotten. "If worldly pleasure allures you away from duty," a more timid and cautious speaker

would have said, "you must relinquish it. Think how much more important your salvation is than any temporal gratification." If your *right hand* offend you, says Christ, CUT IT OFF. If your right eye offend you, PLUCK IT OUT. You had better enter into life with one eye, than to be cast into hell-fire with two.

The delivery of the sermon on the mount is, probably, the most striking example of moral courage, which the world has ever seen. There are two circumstances, which render the occasion on which it was delivered, extraordinary. First, it was a very public occasion. A vast multitude from almost every part of the country were assembled. Judea, the southern province, and Gallilee, the northern, were represented; so were the eastern and western shores of the river Jordan, and many distant cities and towns. From all this wide extent of country a vast multitude, attracted by the fame of the Savior's miracles, had assembled to hear what this professed messenger from heaven had to say. Again, it was probably, though not certainly, a very early occasion. Perhaps the first on which the great principles of the gospel were to be announced to men. By this discourse, containing, as it does, so plain and specific an exposition of the false notions of religion then prevailing, the Savior must have known, that he was laying the foundation of that enmity, which was to result in his destruction. But did he shrink? Did he hold back? Did he conceal or cover over one single obnoxious feature of the truth? He knew that the report of that meeting must be spread to every part of the country. As he looked around upon his auditory, he must have seen, *here*, one from a Gallilean village, *there*, another from beyond the Jordan, and again a third, who would carry his report to distant Jerusalem; and yet thus completely exposed, instead of attempting to soften or conceal, he brought out all the distinctive features of prevailing error, and contrasted

them with the pure principles of his spiritual religion, with a plainness and a point, which was exactly calculated to fix them in memory, and to circulate them most widely throughout the land.

It was always so. The plainness, the point, the undaunted boldness, with which he exposed hypocrisy and sin, and the clear simplicity with which he held up to view the principles of real piety, have no parallel. And yet he knew perfectly well, that in direct consequence of these things, a dark storm was gathering, which must burst in all its fury upon his unsheltered head.

But the enterprising and determined spirit, with which Christ entered into his work, was not satisfied with his own personal exertions. He formed the extraordinary plan of sending out simultaneously, a number of his most cordial friends and followers, to assist in making the most extensive and powerful impression possible, upon the community. At first he sent twelve, then seventy, who went every where, presenting to men the simple duties of repentance for the past, and of pure and holy lives for the future. There could not have been measures more admirably adapted to accomplish the work he had to do. And they succeeded. In two or three years it was done. And every Christian, who has work to do for his Master here, should learn a lesson from the enterprise and system and energy, which Jesus Christ exhibited in doing his.

This then is the key to the character of Jesus Christ in respect to spirit and decision. These qualities shine out with unequalled lustre, whenever there was any *duty* to be done; but the most mild and patient and humble submission take their place, when there is personal injury or suffering to be endured. In the streets of Jerusalem, and on a question, which concerns the character of God or the duty of man, we find him with all his faculties aroused, silencing every opponent by his unanswerable

arguments, or his appeals of irresistible eloquence and power. But when *these subjects* fail, all the energy of attack or defence on his part gives way with them, and before his personal enemies, planning personal injury to him, he stands silent, patient and submissive, leaving the whole torrent of injury to take its course, meeting it with no resistance and returning no reply.

It seems to me, that the history of the world cannot exhibit an act of higher, nobler courage, than our Savior performed, in coming down to meet Judas and the armed band, the night before he was crucified. Just imagine the scene. On the eastern side of Jerusalem, without the walls, there is a sudden descent to a stream, which flows through the valley. Across this stream, on the rising ground beyond, was a quiet and solitary place, where Jesus very often went for retirement and prayer. He understood very well his approaching torture and crucifixion; he had taken, the evening before, his last sad farewell of his disciples, and with the day of agony and death before him on the morrow, he could not sleep. It was a cold night, but a sheltered dwelling in the city was no place for him. He asked his three dearest friends to go with him, that he might once more cross the valley, and for the last time, take his midnight walk upon the Mount of Olives. Oppressed with anxiety and sorrow, he fell down alone before God and prayed, that he might be spared what was to come. He had gone on firmly thus far, but now his heart almost failed him. Six long hours of indescribable agony seemed too much, for the frail human powers, which must necessarily bear the whole. He prayed God to spare him if it *could be* possible.

But it could not. His strength failed under the exhaustion produced by his mental sufferings, and by the more than death-like perspiration, which the night air, so cold at this season that even the hardy soldiers needed

fire, could not chill. Mysterious help from heaven restored him a little, but though refreshed by heavenly sympathy, we must remember that it was human powers, that had this trial to bear.

At last there is heard through the trees, at a distance down the valley, the sound of approaching voices. Lights are seen too;— and now and then a glittering weapon. They are coming for him. Fly! innocent sufferer, fly! Turn to the dark solitudes behind you, and fly for your life!— No. The struggle is over. The Savior, collected and composed, rises and walks on to meet the very swords and spears sent out against him! We must remember, that there was nobody to encourage him, nobody to defend him, or to share his fate. It was in the darkness and stillness of night, the very hour of fear and dread; and the approach of those whose dim forms and suppressed voices arrested his attention, was the signal not of danger, but of death,— nor of death merely, but of protracted and unutterable torture. Still he arose and went forth to meet them. "Whom seek ye?" said he,— "I am he." We have read this story so often, that it has lost its impression upon us; but could we come to it afresh, and really appreciate the gloomy, dreadful circumstances of the scene, we should feel, that the deserted Savior, in coming down under these circumstances, to meet the torches and the weapons, which were to light and guard him back to such enemies and to such a death, exhibits the loftiest example of fortitude, which the world has ever seen. There was less noise, less parade, less display than at Thermopylæ or Trafalgar; but for the real sublimity of courage, the spectacle of this solitary and defenceless sufferer, coming at midnight to meet the betrayer and his band, beams with a moral splendor which never shone on earth before, and will probably never shine again.

We have thus far considered the great leading principles of our Savior's public conduct. As we have presented them they are three.

1. Entire devotedness to his Father's work.

2. Energy, system, and undaunted courage, in prosecuting it.

3. The mildest, most unresisting and forgiving spirit in regard to his own personal wrongs.

We might close our view of his character with these leading principles of it, but there are some other traits of a more private nature, which it is pleasant to notice We shall mention them as they occur

1. He evidently observed and enjoyed nature. There are many allusions to his solitary walks in the fields and on the mountains, and by the sea-side; but the greatest evidence of his love for nature, is to be seen in the manner in which he speaks of its beauties. A man's metaphors are drawn from the sources with which he is most familiar, or which interest him most; so that we can judge very correctly what the habitual thoughts and feelings of a writer are, by observing what images arise to his mind, when he is interested in writing or conversation. We take down a volume of poetry, for an illustration of this remark, and open, almost at random, to the following lines by Henry Kirk White.

"God keep thee, Traveller, on thy journey far;
The wind is bitter keen—the snow o'erlays
The hidden pits and dangerous hollow ways,
And darkness will involve thee. No kind star
To-night will guide thee, Traveller,—and the war
Of winds and elements on thy head will break,
And in thy agonizing ear, the shriek
Of spirits on their stormy car,
Will often ring appalling—I portend
A dismal night,—and on my wakeful bed,
Thoughts, Traveller, of thee, will fill my head,
And him, who rides where winds and waves contend
And strives, rude cradled on the seas, to guide
His lonely bark on the tempestuous tide.

Now such a passage as this admits us very far into the author's habits of thought and feeling. No man could have written it unless he had often *felt* the sublimity of the midnight storm, and sympathised strongly with the anxieties and dangers of the lonely traveller. He must have been out in such a scene and realized the emotions it excites, or he could not have painted them so vividly.

We learn in the same manner how distinct were the impressions of beauty or sublimity, which the works of nature made upon the Savior, by the manner in which he alluded to them. Take for instance, the case where he speaks of the decoration of the lilies. What a conception! We are so familiar with it, that it loses its impression upon us, but if we could approach it anew we should be astonished at its boldness and beauty. He is endeavoring to persuade his disciples not to be anxious about their food or clothing, for if they will do God's will, he will take care of them. "Look at the lilies of the field," says he, "*they* toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." A cold, heartless man, without taste or sensibility, would not have said such a thing as that. He could not; and we may be as sure, that Jesus Christ had stopped to examine and admire the grace and beauty of the plant, and the exquisitely penciled tints of its petal, as if we had actually seen him bending over it, or pointing it out to the attention of his disciples.

The mass of mankind never notice the beauties and wonders, that are always around them. Among hundreds walking in a garden, it is only a very few, who would perceive the objects of astonishment and delight which abound there. Here are several shrubs side by side. They grow from the same earth, are warmed by the same sun, and refreshed by the same showers; and yet the very same juices coming up one stem, arrange them-

selves into a *currant* at the top, — coming up another they form themselves into a *pear*, and in the third case, into a *rose*. The real lover of nature pauses to reflect, as he sees these various fruits and flowers, how strange it is, that a mechanism so exquisite can be arranged in those stems, so as to bring such astonishing and such different results from one common store-house of materials. The multitude do not think of it at all. They consider it as a matter of course, that figs should grow upon the fig-tree, and grapes upon the vine, and that is all they think about it.

Here is a little seed too. It seems to the eye, lifeless and inorganic; indistinguishable from a useless grain of sand. But what a complicated system is safely packed away in its little covering. Put it into the ground, and in a few months return to the spot, and you find a little tree, covered with leaves and flowers, and giving to many birds and insects a shelter and a home.

Now Jesus Christ noticed these things. He perceived their beauty and enjoyed it. His heart was full of images, which such observations must have furnished. He could not otherwise have so beautifully compared the progress of his kingdom to the growth of such a tree. He could not have related the parable of the sower, if he had not noticed with interest the minutest circumstances connected with the culture of the ground. His beautiful allusions to the vine and to the fig-tree, the wheat and the tares, the birds of the air, and the flocks of the field, all prove the same thing. It is not merely that he spoke of those things, but that he alluded to them in a way so beautiful, and touching, and original, as to prove, that he had an observing eye and a warm heart for the beauties and glories of creation.

2. There is the same kind of evidence that he noticed, with the same observing eye and intelligent interest, the principles and characteristics of human nature. Take

for example, his story of the father's welcoming his returning prodigal,—the woman seeking the lost money,—the steward making friends with his master's debtors, and the pardoned sinner loving much because much had been forgiven. He observed every thing; and his imagination was stored with an inexhaustible supply of images, drawn from every source, and with these he illustrated and enforced his principles in a manner altogether unparalleled by any writings sacred or profane.

3. In exerting an influence over man, he endeavored *to awaken the moral sympathies*, rather than produce cold conviction through the intellect. In regard to almost all important moral and religious truth, there is a witness within every man's heart, and it was the aim of our Savior to awaken this witness and to encourage him to speak. Other men attempt to do every thing by reasoning,—cold, naked reasoning; which, after all, it may be almost said, is the most absolutely inefficient means which can be applied, for the production of any moral effects upon men.

Christ very seldom attempted to *prove* what he said. He expressed and illustrated truth, and then left it to work its own way. Sometimes he argued, but then it was almost always in self-defence. When at liberty to choose his own mode, as for example in the sermon on the mount, he said such things as commended themselves to every man's conscience, and their power consisted in the clearness and emphasis with which he said them. If he reasoned at all, the distance was very short between his premises and his conclusion, and his steps very simple and few.

4. Jesus loved his friends. The duty of universal benevolence, which he so strongly enforced, he never meant should supersede the claims of private, personal friendship, or interfere with its enjoyments. He himself, while he was ready to die for thousands, preferred to

take his walks, and share his griefs, with Peter, James and John. There is nothing more touching, in regard to this subject, than his private intimation at the last supper, to his dearest personal friend, of the fact, that it was Judas, who was to betray him. He understood and felt the happiness of communion and confidence between kindred spirits, and, by his example, has authorized us to link ourselves to one another, by the ties of friendship and affection, as strongly as we please. Christianity, in expanding the affections of the individual, till they reach every brother and sister on the globe, does not weaken or endanger a single private or domestic tie. While it draws the whole human family together, it links, by a still closer union than before, the husband with the wife, and the parent with the child, — sister to sister, and friend to friend. It is indeed "the bond of perfectness," or as we should, at this day, express it, A PERFECT BOND.

5. The last thing I have to say about the character of Jesus Christ is, he loved his mother. Perhaps I have some young readers, who can remember that at some recent period, when they have been sick or suffering from any cause, they have, by their fretfulness or discontent, brought trouble and care to their parents, and have considered themselves excused for it, by the circumstances in which they have been placed. To them I have one thing to say. Your Savior was nailed to the cross. The whole weight of his body was suspended from his lacerated limbs, and here he had to hang hour after hour, till life actually sunk under the power of suffering. But even here he did not forget his mother. He gave, in the most touching manner possible, his dearest friend a charge to be kind to her, to protect her, to take care of her as long as she should live. He did this, however, almost by a word, for under such circumstances it was torture to speak. "BEHOLD THY MOTHER." That was all; but it was enough. Now let me ask

each one of my readers, whether old or young, who has a mother still in life, as you shut this book at the close of this chapter, to go and devise some act of kindness and affection for her, in imitation of the dying example which the Savior set us. Do something to cheer and comfort her; even if it is no very substantial act of kindness, it will bring gladness to her heart, as a memorial of your remembrance and affection. Mary must have felt this proof of love most deeply. They told the Savior, long before, that his mother was to be envied. She must have endured a great deal of solicitude and a great deal of suffering, during her life; but it must have gone far towards counterbalancing it all, to be remembered thus, under such circumstances, and by such a son.

CHAPTER III.

HUMAN DUTY,

OR THE SAVIOR'S MESSAGE TO MANKIND.

"And they went out and preached that men should repent."

It is a remarkable fact, and one which has often surprised careful readers of the Bible, that scarcely any thing is said by our Savior himself, in regard to his own sufferings, as the ground of human salvation, while the writings and addresses of the apostles are full of this theme. There is a most extraordinary contrast, in this respect, between the gospels and the epistles. In the former, Christ's sufferings and death are scarcely ever spoken of, in the latter, nothing is spoken of so much. This state of the case has, on the one hand, led many persons to underrate the influence and importance of our Savior's sufferings and death, and they defend their views by referring to the nature of our Savior's instruc-

Wrong way to read the Bible. Right way.

tions. Others err on the other side, by taking the epistles as their only model, — not sufficiently considering the character of Christ's instructions. Others are embarrassed when they think on this subject; they do not know how to reconcile the seeming inconsistency, though they endeavor to diminish it, as far as possible, by exaggerating and emphasizing the little which Jesus Christ did say, in regard to his sufferings and death. We ought always to suspect ourselves when we are attempting to get out of scriptural difficulties in this way;— by loading passages of scripture with more meaning than they will naturally bear; a process very common among theological writers. The best way is to let the Bible speak for itself. We must not try to improve it, but just let it tell its own story, in its own way. The man who, when he reads some of the strong, decided passages in the Epistles, ascribing all hope of human salvation to the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God finds himself holding back from the writer's view, endeavoring to qualify the language or to explain it away, is not studying the Bible in the right spirit. On the other hand, he who cannot take the directions which Christ or John gave, for beginning a life of piety by simple repentance for the past, without adding something from his own theological stores, or forcing the language to express what never could have been understood by those who originally heard it, — he cannot be studying this book with the right spirit. We must take the Bible as it is; and there certainly is a very striking and extraordinary difference, between the public instructions of our Savior himself, and those of his apostles, in respect to the prominence given to the efficacy of his sufferings in preparing the way for the salvation of men. Let us look into this.

Whenever, under any government, a wrong is done, there is, as any one will see, a broad distinction between

the measures, which the government must adopt, in order to render it safe to pardon, and the conditions with which the guilty individual is required to comply, in order to avail himself of the offer. To make this plain, even to my younger readers, I will describe a case. It illustrates the principle, I admit, on a very small scale.

In a remote and newly settled town in New England, on the shore of a beautiful pond, and under a hill covered and surrounded with forests, was a small school house, to which, during the leisure months of the winter, thirty or forty boys and girls gathered, day after day, from the small farm-houses, which were scattered over the valleys around. One evening a sort of exhibition was held there. Before the time had arrived, there had been indications of an approaching snow storm. These increased during the evening; and when, at the close of it, the assembly began to disperse, they found that the storm had fairly set in.

The master was sitting at his desk, putting away his papers, and preparing to go home. The snow was beating against the windows, and the aspect of the cold and stormy weather without, made many of the scholars reluctant to leave the warm and bright fire, which was still burning on the spacious hearth. For many of them, sleighs were to be sent by their friends, others were waiting for company, and every minute or two the door would open and admit a boy shivering with cold, and white with snow.

Presently the master heard some voices at the door, in which he could distinguish tones of complaint and suffering. Several of the boys seemed to be talking together, apparently about some act of injustice which had occurred, and after waiting a few minutes, the master sent for all the boys who were standing at the door, to come to him.

Half a dozen walked eagerly in, and behind them

followed one, more reluctantly; his head was bare, and he had evidently been in tears. As they entered the room, the conversation among the other children was hushed, all their preparations were suspended, and every face was turned with an expression of eager interest towards the master, as this group approached him.

"William," said the master to one of the foremost, "there seems to have been some trouble, will you tell me what it is?"

"Yes sir: Joe Symmes threw *his* cap," (pointing to the sorrowful looking boy in the rear,) "off upon the pond, and it has blown away and he cannot find it."

"Joseph," said the master, "is it so?"

Joseph acknowledged the fact. It appeared, on more careful inquiry, that there had been some angry collision between the boys, in which Joseph had been almost entirely to blame; it was a case of that kind of tyranny of the stronger, which is so common among school boys. In the end, he had seized his schoolmate's cap, and thrown it off upon the icy surface of the pond, over which it had glided away with the driving wind and snow, and was soon lost from view. Joseph said he knew it was wrong, and he was sorry. He said he ran after it, as soon as it was gone, but he lost sight of it, and that now he did not know what he could do to get it again.

The master told the boys they might go to the fire, while he considered, for a few minutes, what he ought to do.

When left alone, the teacher reflected that there were two separate subjects of consideration for him. First there was an individual who had been guilty of an act of injustice. Next there was a little community, who had been witnesses of that injustice, and were all in suspense, waiting to know what would follow.

"I am sorry to punish Joseph," thought he, "for he seems to be sorry for what he has done, and I think it

The plan formed. Penitence necessary before forgiveness.

highly probable he will not repeat it; but if I let such a case pass with a mere reproof, I fear it will do injury to the school. The boys will have less abhorrence in future for acts of injustice and oppression by the stronger, than they have had. Just in proportion as they see sin, without seeing sad results coming from it, they will lose their sensitiveness to its guilt. I must not let this case pass, without something to make a moral impression. I wish I could do this without bringing suffering upon Joseph, but I do not see how I can."

"Ah! I see what I can do;" thought he, "I will take the suffering myself. Yes; I will forgive Joseph at once, and then I will go out myself and find the cap, or help them find it, and when the scholars see, that the consequences of this offence come upon *my* head, bringing me inconvenience and even suffering, especially if they see me bear them with a kind and forgiving spirit, perhaps it will do as much good as punishing Joseph would do. Yes; I know that all my pupils, and Joseph among the rest, are strongly attached to me, and I am sure that when they see me going out into the cold storm, over the ice, and through the snow, to repair the injury which he has done, it will make a strong impression. In fact it will, I am sure, touch them more effectually, and produce a much stronger dislike to such a spirit, than four times as much inconvenience and suffering inflicted as a punishment upon Joseph himself."

It is evident now that such a plan would be safe and proper only on supposition that Joseph is really sorry for what he has done. The course proposed would be altogether inadmissable, if the offender, instead of being humble and penitent, should appear angry and stubborn.

On the other hand, if the master's plan was a wise one, although real penitence on the part of Joseph would be absolutely necessary, nothing else would be necessary. *He* need not know any thing about the plan on

which the master relies, for producing the right moral impression on the little community.

Now the whole object of this illustration, is to bring clearly forward the distinction, between what is necessary *as a measure of government*,— in order to prepare the way to offer pardon, and what is necessary *as an act of the criminal*, in order to enable him to receive it.

It is very evident, in this case, that these two things are entirely distinct and disconnected, and that it is not at all necessary that Joseph should know the ground on which the Teacher concluded it safe for him to be forgiven. The master's suffering the inconvenience and trouble is an essential thing *to be done*, in order to render it safe to forgive; but it is not an essential thing *to be known*, at the time forgiveness is declared. In fact, the most delicate and the most successful mode of managing the affair, would be for him to say nothing about it, but simply to do the thing, and let it produce its effects.

Accordingly the master, in this case, after a few minutes of reflection, called the boys to him again.

"Joseph," said he, "you have done wrong, in oppressing one younger and weaker than yourself, and I might justly punish you. I have concluded however to forgive you; — that is if you are sorry. Are you sorry?"

"Yes sir, I am," replied the boy distinctly.

"And are you willing to make proper reparation, if I will tell you what to do?"

"Yes sir."

"James," continued the master, "are you willing he should be forgiven?"

"Yes sir, I am willing he should be forgiven, but how shall I get my cap?"

"I will talk with you about that, presently. You see that is another part of the subject; the question now is, what is to be done with Joseph? He has done wrong, and might justly be punished, but he is sorry for it, and in this case, I conclude not to punish him."

If the whole subject were to be left here, the reader will perceive how incomplete and unfinished the transaction would be considered, in respect to its effects on those who witnessed it. It would, if left here, bring down the standard of justice and kindness among the boys. And if the pupils had been accustomed to an efficient government, they would be surprised at such a result.

But still, though the teacher had something in reserve to prevent such an injury, it was not, as I have said before, at all necessary, nay it was not expedient, that he should say any thing about it, thus far. Joseph's penitence was essential to render his pardon proper. This it was indeed necessary for him to understand. The measure to be adopted, was essential to render that pardon safe. This it was essential for no one but the master to understand. It was necessary that the moral effect should be produced on all, but the measure which the master had in view for producing it, might safely remain unexplained, till the time came for putting it into execution.

After all was thus settled with the boys, the master took down his cloak, and said he would go out and see if he could find the cap. Joseph wanted to go with him, but his teacher replied, that it would do no good for him to go out in the cold too;—it might be necessary to go quite across the pond. He however asked Joseph to show him exactly where he had thrown the cap, and then, noticing the direction of the wind, the master walked on in pursuit.

A cluster of boys stood at the door, and the girls crowded at the windows to see their teacher work his way over the slippery surface, stopping to examine every dark object, and exploring with his feet every little drift of snow. They said nothing about the philosophy of the transaction; in fact they did not understand it. The

theory of moral government was a science unknown to them; but every heart was warm with gratitude to their teacher, and alive to a vivid sense of the criminality of such conduct as had resulted thus. And when, after a time, they saw him returning with the cap in his hand, which he had found half buried in the snow, under a bank on the opposite shore, there was not one whose heart was not full of affection and gratitude towards the teacher, and of displeasure at the sin. And the teacher himself, though he said not a word in explanation, felt that by that occurrence, a more effectual blow had been struck at every thing like unkindness and ill-will among his pupils, than would have been secured by any reproofs he could have administered, or by any plan of punishment, however just and severe.

Such a case is analogous, in many respects, to the measures God has adopted to make the forgiveness of human guilt safe. It is only one point, however, of the analogy, which I wish the reader to observe here, viz. that though the measure in question was a thing essential for the master *to do*, it was not essential for the criminal to *understand*, at the time he was forgiven.

So in regard to the moral effect in God's government, produced by the sufferings of Jesus Christ, in preparing the way for the forgiveness of sin. The measure was necessary to render free forgiveness safe, but a clear understanding of its nature and of its moral effect, is not always necessary to enable the individual sinner to avail himself of it.

In the early ages of the world, it was obscurely intimated to men, that, through some future descendant of Abraham, measures were to be adopted, which should open the way for the expiation of human guilt. What these measures were, few, if any, understood; they were in many cases, anxiously waiting for a developement of them, but, in the meantime, it was universally under-

stood, that if any man would forsake his sins and serve Jehovah, he should be forgiven. The simple proclamation, "Repent and be forgiven," went every where. The ground, on which such a proclamation could be safe and wise, it was for God alone to consider, and to reveal to men, just as soon, and just as extensively, as he might see fit.

Let it be understood, that I am speaking of what is essential, not what is desirable. The knowledge of our Savior's sufferings and death, and clear ideas of the grounds of them, have been in every age, the most powerful of all possible means of impressing the heart, and leading men to God. Still they are not the only means. Man could not have been forgiven if Christ had not died, but he may be forgiven, and yet not know that Christ died, till he actually meets him in heaven.

The moment a little child, for instance, is capable of knowing that it has a Maker, and of discerning between right and wrong, it is capable of loving God, and feeling penitence for sin; and the mysterious influences of the Spirit may as easily awaken these feelings at this age, as at any other. It can be forgiven, however, only through the sufferings of its Savior, and yet months must elapse, before it can know any thing about these sufferings; and years, before it can look into the principles of government enough, to see why they were necessary, or to appreciate at all the moral impression they produce.

Suppose a christian minister is thrown by shipwreck upon a savage island, and in a state of sickness and exhaustion so great, that he feels that he must sink in a few days to the grave. He knows nothing of the language, but he soon succeeds, by careful attention, in obtaining phrases enough to preach repentance.

"There is a God," he says to those around him in his dying hour. "He will punish the bad.—Become good and you will please him."

"Ah!" reply the savages, "we have all been bad already,— very bad."

"Think not about the past," he replies. "It will be forgiven:—there is a way:— I cannot explain it. Leave your wickedness and do right, and God will save you."

As he utters these words, his strength fails, and his audience can hear no more. But they have heard enough. I do not say enough *to induce* them to forsake their sins and return to God, but to show them how to do it. And if men, after hearing only such a sermon as that, were to continue their lives of wickedness, and die unchanged, it would still be true, that the opportunity of mercy had been fully before them.

"We did not know," they might say, when called to account, "that a Savior had died for us, and consequently could not know how we could be forgiven."

"You are without excuse;" the judge might reply. "It was for you to abandon your sins;— It was for me to consider how you could be forgiven."

Now every savage that ever lived has had just such a sermon as this preached to him. Not by a christian minister, indeed, wrecked on the reefs of his island, but by a far more faithful and intelligible preacher than any such would be. Conscience, the universal ambassador from heaven, has been unceasingly faithful, in every age, and in every clime, preaching repentance, and opening the door of salvation to every human soul. That our fellowmen do almost invariably, if left to this warning voice alone, disregard it and persist in sin, is indeed true; but at the day of judgment it will appear that, of all the countless millions of the human family, though but a very small portion ever heard of a Savior, there never was one, who might not have been saved through his death, if he had done what God, during all his life, was continually calling him to do.

Though this preaching, that is the simple call to re-

pentance, is generally powerless, it is not always so. In the Jewish nation there were undoubtedly a great many penitent and pardoned men, though they knew little or nothing of their future Savior. John the Baptist undoubtedly made many true converts; even Jonah's preaching was successful; and a hundred and twenty, at least, were found to have received aright the instructions of our Savior, though even his apostles did not know that he was to be crucified for them. It is so too in our times. True piety, unquestionably, often exists where there is a very imperfect understanding, or a very limited appreciation of the nature of the great sacrifice for sin. This fact is very evident to all, though it often very much embarrasses those who do not properly distinguish between what it is necessary for man to do, in order to be saved, and what it is necessary for *God* to do, in order to render it safe to save him. On this latter point, the human soul may be kept in the dark by a thousand circumstances, for which it is not responsible; but in regard to the former, it cannot be kept in ignorance or led into mistake. Conscience may indeed be perverted; but still, it will sometimes speak,—more or less distinctly it is true,—but it will speak: and not a human being can get through his time of trial here, without hearing its warning. God has given it a message to every one, which, if heeded, will secure salvation; and that message it will in every case, most assuredly deliver.

It seems, then, that Jesus Christ very clearly recognised the distinction between the provision which God must make, in order to open the way for human salvation, and the part which man must perform, to avail himself of it, and it is the last, very evidently, which it is of direct and immediate importance for man to know. It was the last, which he accordingly devoted his chief time and attention in urging on man,— viz. his own

personal, immediate duty. They who heard him were indeed inexcusable before, but the clearness, the distinctness and the emphasis, with which he brought forward the claims of God over human hearts, rendered them more inexcusable still.

And here I must remark, that this mode of attempting to turn men to God, met with only very partial success. Jesus Christ succeeded in persuading very few. It was not till afterwards, when the love of Christ in dying for men, was loudly and universally proclaimed, that hearts were touched, and penitence awakened. But still this preaching of the sufferings of Christ afterwards, was not throwing additional light upon duty, — it was only a new inducement to do it. The great duty, repentance, was the same afterwards as before. The only difference was, that men were more easily led to repent, after they had learned the greatness of the sacrifice by which alone penitence could be available. They ought, however, to have repented before; if they had done so, God would have forgiven them, though they could not have understood how such forgiveness could safely be bestowed. And so it is now. By the sacrifice of the Son of God, the door of SALVATION ON REPENTANCE, is opened to every human being on the globe.*

But to return. The great subject of Christ's instructions seems to have been simply, *human duty*. It was his

* It has often been made a question among religious writers, whether, in point of fact, repentance and salvation ever come to the inhabitants of those benighted countries, where the Savior has never been known. Into this question we do not now enter; i. e. it is not our design here to inquire whether they ever do repent and forsake their sins, but only to exhibit the sentiment held up by the apostle, in the first chapter to the Romans, that God has not left himself without witness to any son or daughter of Adam. It is certain that if they would listen to this voice, and repent of sin, they would be forgiven. Whether they will or not, is a question which we consider more fully in the following chapter.

object to explain, not the great arrangements and measures of God's government, but the duties which each individual sinner had personally to perform.

In order to exhibit clearly the ground he took, we must consider a moment, the plan which God had in view in creating men. It was his design to form one great, united and happy family, with himself at the head of it. He meant to devote himself to the happiness of his creatures, and he wished them to be interested in each other, and joined to him. It is exactly the plan which every wise parent adopts in his family. Many a father does all he can to promote this mutual good-will among his children, and this feeling of dependence and attachment towards him as their head, while he, nevertheless, steadily refuses to come under the same system in his relation to God, who is the great head of the family to which he himself belongs. His children, one would suppose, might often see the contrast between the filial and fraternal duty, which he is willing to perform himself, and what he expects of them.

Taking this view of the design of God, in regard to the family of man, we shall be surprised to see how admirably adapted to secure it, that code of laws is, which he originally gave to men. We have read the ten commandments so many times, nay they have been so long, and so indelibly impressed on the memory, that it is difficult for us to approach them in such a way, as to get a fresh and vivid conception of their character. To obviate in some degree, this difficulty, I give the substance of them in other language, so that the reader may see more clearly, by looking at them, as it were, in a new light, with what admirable skill they are adapted to the object. The wisest assembly of statesmen or legislators which ever convened, if called together to form a code for the world,—to apply to every nation, and to operate through all time, could not have made a better selection

of points to be brought forward, or arranged them with more scientific and logical precision, or expressed them in clearer terms. And yet the infidel affects to believe, that they were the production of the half civilized leader of a wandering horde,—contrived just to assist their author in maintaining an influence over his semibarbarous followers! But let us look at this code.

THE MORAL LAW.

I. DUTY TO GOD.

1. Your Maker must be the highest object of your interest and affection. Allow nothing to come before him; but make it your first and great desire to please him and to obey his commands.

2. You shall never speak of him lightly or with irreverence, and you shall not regard any visible object as the representative of him. He is a spirit, invisible from his very nature, and you must worship him in spirit and in truth.

3. Consecrate one day in seven to the worship of God, and to your own religious improvement. Entirely suspend, for this purpose, all worldly employments, and sacredly devote the day to God.

II. DUTY TO PARENTS.

1. You are placed in this world under the care of parents, whom God makes his vicegerents, to provide for your early wants, and to afford you protection. Now you must obey and honor them. Do what they command you, and comply with their wishes, and always treat them with respect and affection.

III. DUTY TO MANKIND.

Keep constantly in view, in all your intercourse with men, *their* welfare and happiness, as well as your own. Conscientiously respect the rights of others, in regard,

1. To the security of life.

2. To the peace and happiness of the family.
3. To property.
4. To reputation.

In keeping these commands too, you must regulate your heart as well as your conduct. God forbids the unholy desire, as much as he does the unholy action.

Such is God's moral law. And we may triumphantly ask, where is the statesman or philosopher, who can mend it. In giving it as above, I have done nothing but alter its language, so as to present it with freshness to the reader,— and number its sections, so as to bring to view its admirable arrangement. I have not omitted a provision, or added one not originally there, nor altered the position of a single command. Look at it again; and imagine it perfectly obeyed in this world. What a world it would make of it! This is that great law of God, whose perfection and purity are praised from one end of the Bible to the other; this is the law men have broken and will break; and in regard to this law it is, that the whole controversy is pending between God and man. Men pretend to find a great mystery about the nature of sin, and the nature of holiness, to excuse themselves for remaining unchanged; but the whole mystery is here. Here is a law which THEY WILL NOT KEEP. They never have kept it, and they will not begin. And yet disregarded, violated, trampled upon as it has been by common consent, throughout the whole human family, no man has ever dared to lift up his voice against its justice. No. From the day when it was first thundered forth on Sinai, it has been loudly proclaiming its commands, conscience, in every bosom, re-echoing its voice; and the boldest, the wildest, the most daring opposer of God, never had a word to say against the justice of its claims.

Now the great design of our Savior's instructions, was to induce men to abandon their sins, and begin at once

to keep this law. He explained its spirituality, and brought out to view the two great principles on which all its commands were based; supreme affection to God, and disinterested benevolence towards men.

It is most interesting to observe, how directly and clearly Jesus Christ always insisted upon *spiritual* obedience to that law. I mean by this, obedience of the heart; — and how constantly he cut off, in the most decided manner, all those hollow acts of mere external conformity, which men were continually substituting in its place. And it is, if possible, still more interesting to observe, how liberal and expanded were his views in regard to the *outward acts* by which this heartfelt compliance might be indicated. On the one hand, no act whatever, and no course of life, however seemingly religious, would satisfy him, if there was evidence that the secret feelings of the heart were wrong. On the other hand, no action was too trivial to be a mark of piety, if it only proceeded from the right spirit. For example, here are a priest and a Levite, devoting their lives to their Maker's service. Nobody doubts their eminent holiness. How does the Savior judge? Why, he leads them along a road where a man lies suffering. He watches to see what they will do.—*They pass by on the other side.* Ah, that reveals the secret! A man may devote his life to the external service of God, without really loving him at all; but he cannot really love him, and yet pass by, and neglect a distressed and suffering brother. And so in a thousand other cases. The beauty, the clearness, the delicacy, and yet the searching, scrutinizing power of the tests he applied to the religious professions of those days, are unparalleled. They would make sad work with some of the bold, self-sufficient, hollow-hearted zeal, which exists in our times.

But while he could be deceived by no counterfeit, and would take no specious appearances on trust, but cut

away, with a most unsparing hand, all false pretences, and all mere external show, his liberality, in regard to modes by which real, genuine piety should exhibit itself, was unbounded. All he wished was to have the heart right. He cared not how its feelings were evinced. He found a man engaged in his ordinary business, and asked him to leave it and follow him; another wished to know what he should do to inherit eternal life, and he directed him to employ all his property as a means of doing good; in another case, he pronounced an individual forgiven, merely on account of personal kindness shown to himself! Sometimes he called on men to repent; sometimes to believe on him; sometimes to obey his precepts. He was satisfied of Mary's piety, by the teachable, docile spirit she manifested, in listening to his conversation in her house; he pronounced many persons forgiven, on account of the feeling with which they came to be healed; and even when the malefactor on the cross asked to be remembered, the Savior considered those words alone, as the external indications of a renewed heart.

It is very evident that he thought it of comparatively little consequence what men did *first*, in beginning to serve God. The great point was to induce them to serve him at all. We are very slow to follow his example in this respect. We want to have some precise way, in which all men shall repent and be saved. We arrange the steps, and must have them taken in their exact, prescribed order, and if these steps are not followed, we are suspicious and afraid, whatever may be the ultimate fruits. We consider the case anomalous, if we are compelled to admit it to be genuine.

A master of a family, we will suppose, goes away from home, leaving his sons in charge of his affairs, and giving them employment, in which he urges them to be diligent and faithful until his return. After he leaves them,

however, they all neglect their duty, and live in idleness, or occupy themselves solely with their amusements. A friend comes in, and remonstrates with them. He gives them a labored account of the radical defects in their hearts, the philosophical distinction between dutiful and undutiful sons, and the metaphysical steps of a change from one character to the other. His discourse is all perfectly true, and admirably philosophical, but it is sadly impotent, in regard to making any impression on human hearts.

Another man comes to address them in a different mode. He calls upon them at once to return to their duty.

"What shall we do first?" ask the boys.

"Do first? do any thing first; there is the garden to be weeded, and the library to be arranged, and your rooms to be put in order. No matter what you do first. Begin to obey your father; that is the point."

As he says this he goes around the premises, and, as he finds one after another, loitering in idleness or mischief, he calls upon them to return to duty. They are awakened; they see, more distinctly than they had done, their negligence and guilt; and as they come successively, to know what they shall do, he points out to their attention various tasks, according to the age and situation of each. His object is not merely external, but sincere and heartfelt obedience, but he cares little by what particular act, the new course of obedience begins.

It is just so with the preaching of Jesus Christ. He explained the purity and beauty and perfection of God's holy law, and then called upon men every where to begin to live in conformity to it. It is no matter what they do first. No matter with what particular aspect the dawning light of Christianity first shines; let it enter where it will, it will rise and spread till it illuminates the whole. Nor can any external action, if it comes from the

right spirit, be too unimportant to constitute the first step in a christian course. Jesus Christ acted on this principle most fully. He even said that if a man would give a cup *of cold water*, to a disciple, in the name of Christ, i. e. from christian feeling, he should not lose his reward!

Nor is that remark a mere metaphor, striking and beautiful as it is. It is strictly true, that giving a cup of water to a follower of the Savior, may be the first act of a religious life. A man who has been neglecting or opposing religion all his days, may be asked by a christian, some trifling favor like that, and the opportunity of promoting, even in so slight a degree, the cause he had been opposing, might so bring to his view the happiness of co-operating with God, in contrast with the misery and guilt of opposing him, that his heart might melt at once, and he might do that little deed of kindness, in the exercise of his very first feeling of submission to his Maker.

The course which our Savior pursued is the most perfectly philosophical. Holiness is *submission to God's law;* and though, in principle and spirit it is always the same, it assumes in the heart many different forms; or rather a holy heart, a heart willing to submit, will exist in many different states, according to the object presented to it. Hold up God's favors to it, and it feels grateful; present its past sins and it mourns: show God's goodness, and the leading principles of his government and character, and it rejoices. Thus holiness looking at sin, is penitence; at God, is joy; at duty, resolution; at self, humility; at human woes, compassion. In Abraham, it shone as obedience; in Job, as patience; in John, as love. And yet in all it is one. If it exist in one form, it will exist in each of the others, when the circumstances call for them. Job would have been obedient if God had commanded him to leave his country, and Abraham would have been patient under suffering, like Job. We hear nothing of Joseph's penitence, nor

of Samuel's faith in Christ, nor of Daniel's brotherly love. But it was the same spirit, nevertheless, which reigned in all these hearts, appearing by different exhibitions, but in all its hundred forms remaining still the same. It was holiness,— attachment to the cause of God,— desire to keep his pure and perfect law, and submission to his will. This spirit shines in various hues, and with different degrees of lustre, according to the varying circumstances and conditions of the hearts in which it burns. But it is the same spirit, whether it guides Abraham across the desert, or inspires David's songs of praise; whether it leads Peter to penitence, fills Stephen's heart with peace and joy,— or brings thousands in the streets of Jerusalem, to believe in the Savior and forsake their sins. It is not enough, to say that these various christian graces are all of one family; they are all in essence one and the same thing: so that if one comes, the others will inevitably, as circumstances call them, all follow in their train.

This view of the subject is of immense practical importance to all who are endeavoring, at the present day, to promote piety. It shows us how very various, and how entirely different, may be the first steps of the return to God. You have under your care, for instance, a little child. He is too young to know much about religious truth;— the nature of forgiveness,— the necessity of punishment,— the love of the Savior,— or a judgment to come. You can tell him of God, however; his existence, his presence, his holy character; and then you can just ask him, some morning, *to do right that day for the sake of pleasing him.* Perhaps he will not. He may try to do right, for the purpose of receiving your praises or rewards, without feeling, however, any desire to please God. On the other hand, perhaps he will. If he does, it will indeed be through an influence exerted upon his tender affections, in answer to your prayers; but he may be, and

probably in many instances, children have been, under just such circumstances, turned to God, and led to begin a service, which they are still continuing in heaven. Many children have thus been reconciled to God, when they were too young to know any thing about the source of spiritual life within them, or even the existence of that Savior, through whose death alone, they were finally declared justified and forgiven.

There are many modes by which the human soul may be shut up in darkness, besides through the weakness and immaturity of infantile powers. There are the inveterate prejudices of an erroneous education, the influence of mistaken friends, the colored medium through which religious truth is seen, or distortions and interruptions of various kinds in the channels by which it is conveyed to them. If now, in any such case, means can be brought to bear upon the heart, so as by divine assistance to awaken any one christian grace,— any single truly christian feeling,— the danger is over. A stone is taken out of the firmly compacted arch of impenitence and sin, and the whole structure must crumble down. Listening to arguments for the truth will often confirm men in error, but doing their duty will inevitably burst its chains. "If any man will do his will," said Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine;" and it would be well if speculating, doubting inquirers, all over the land, should learn from it, that practical obedience should come before speculations in theology;— that they had better begin to do God's will first, and discuss the principles of his government afterwards.

But we are wandering from our subject, which is the fact that Jesus Christ spent all his strength in inducing men to submit in heart to God, and to keep his holy law, and that if he found them in heart willing to do this, he was but little solicitous about the precise act by which the new life should begin. These acts were various

then, and they are various now. A young man, for example, having hesitated between the service of his Maker and the service of sin, walks out alone on a summer evening upon the sea shore, and there, while meditating upon his character and condition, he resolves that he will hesitate no longer, but that he will return to his Maker; and he utters with honest sincerity, and from his heart, the Lord's prayer,— language which he has often uttered, though without feeling, before. *His* first christian exercise is prayer. Another, is overwhelmed with conviction of sin; and suffers hour after hour, or day after day, under its oppressive load. At last his heart suddenly feels and appreciates and rejoices in the goodness and holiness against which he has been contending; he bursts forth in God's praise, and all nature seems to shine with his Maker's glory. *His* first christian feeling is joy. Another's heart melts into godly and heartfelt sorrow for its sins; the first renewed emotion in this case, is penitence. There is no end to the variety of forms which the movements of spiritual life assumes; and Jesus Christ, while he most vigorously insisted that it should be real, genuine, heartfelt obedience, to THE LAW, attached no importance to the particular act by which it should first be rendered.

There is one subject more, which must be considered here. I refer to the view our Savior took of the forms and ceremonies of religion. His principle was this. He devoted all his strength to secure spiritual principles; and in regard to all its ceremonial aspects, he left religion to accommodate itself to the varying tastes and habits of mankind, and to the changing customs and states of society, which the progress of time occasions. It is remarkable how little he specified as to forms. He did not even arrange any form of church government for his own times, nor give any specific directions in regard to any

christian ceremonies; an example unparalleled, we believe, among the founders of religions. There is something peculiarly striking in this point of view, in his manner of instituting the celebration of the supper. Instead of having a sort of code drawn up, specifying the various parts of the ceremony, the kind of elements to be used, the frequency, and the attending circumstances,—he simply says, at the close of his last supper, as they were about to depart,—"Do *this* in remembrance of me." THIS. One word contains the whole description. He could not have left it more vaguely and indefinitely expressed; and they who press the forms of Christianity, while they forget its spirit, cannot be more pointedly reproved than by asking them to contrast the clearness, the point, the emphasis, the discriminating precision, with which Christ pressed spiritual duties upon men, with the unconcerned and almost careless air, with which he dismissed the whole subject of the most solemn ceremony which he established, with, "Do *this*, in remembrance of me."

After our Savior's death, the apostles, animated by the same spirit, gradually established modes of church government for the exigencies of their own times. They modified them as occasion required, and so careful were they to leave no record of a mode, which might subsequently be made a rule, that no ingenuity has been able to make out any one consistent system, from the various partial directions they gave. And even could this be done, it would be no authority for us. I repeat it,—if a clear and consistent system of church government and of modes of worship could be deduced from the practice merely of the apostles, it would be no rule for us. We are bound *to believe the assertions* of inspired men, but not by any means to *imitate their practice*. Their practice was often wrong; though this is not what we here refer to. It is because the circumstances in which they

were placed,— the state of society and the condition of the world were peculiar, and from the very nature of the case, they must have been left to make arrangements adapted to their circumstances, but which would be inexpedient in ours. Their practice, therefore, even where we admit they were right, is of no binding obligation on us. So that, though we are bound to believe what the Apostles said, we are not bound to do what they did, unless we are placed in the same circumstances. In fact, if we are to go back at all, for the authority of practice, on this subject, we ought to go back to the fountain head, and imitate the Savior himself; that is, *employ none but itinerant preachers, and send them out two and two!* The conclusion is irresistible.

No. Nothing can be plainer, than that Jesus Christ meant to secure the spirit of Christianity, and to leave to each age and nation, the regulation of its *forms*. He adopted one mode,— the one suited to his purpose. His apostles immediately adopted another, which they changed as circumstances required; and it has gone on changing ever since, and it will go on changing probably until the millennium, when modes and forms of worship will be as various and as unnumbered, as the domestic and social customs, of the human race, divided as it is, into a thousand nations, and dwelling in every variety of region and clime.

The narrow-minded view, which would have fixed in Judea, eighteen centuries ago, a system of organization to be adopted by all the races of men, and to continue unchanged for forty centuries, would have worked incalculable mischief. Emergencies continually occur, demanding new efforts, on new or modified plans. Sometimes great denominations arise thus, and accomplish what existing organizations could not have effected. At other times gradual political changes so alter the genius, and character, and habits of a people, that the external

form in which Christianity embodies itself must change too. It is the spirit alone that remains stationary and common in all.

And yet nine-tenths of nominal Christians, all over the world, are firmly believing and sincerely wishing, that their own denomination may extend and swallow up the rest, and become universal. But let us consider a moment, what would be the result, if such were the case. That one universal denomination would soon have leaders. It might, or might not be so constituted, as to have them in name and office, but it certainly would have them in reality. Grant, if you please, that this first set of leaders are really humble, devoted, honest Christians; what sort of men would be ambitiously looking up to their posts, and begin to struggle and crowd for the succession? Why there can be no moral effect more certain, than that in such a case, four or five generations would place worldly, selfish, ambitious men at the head of the religious interests of the world! We have had one terrible experiment of the effects of one great denomination, to illustrate this reasoning. God grant that the dark day may never come again.

It was the spirit of Christianity only that our Savior urged. He proclaimed forgiveness to all who would abandon their sins, and return to God, and keep the great moral law, which had been enacted for the general happiness. He proclaimed the fact that forgiveness was sure, and thus opened the door of hope to every man; but he did not say much about the dark path of sorrow and suffering which he should himself have to tread, in order to open the way. It seems as if, with the delicacy which always characterizes ardent love, he would not inform men of the sufferings he was about to bear for them. He told them they might be forgiven, but he never reminded them of their obligations to him for pur-

chasing their pardon. Even his disciples, till they came to see him die, had no conception of his love. They learned it at last however. They saw him suffer and die, and inspiration from above explained to them something about the influence of his death. They had enjoyed its benefits long before, in peace with God, forgiveness of sin, and hope of heaven; but now for the first time, they understood how those benefits were procured. It is hard to tell which touches our gratitude most sensibly; the ardent love which led him to do what he did, or the delicacy with which he refrained from speaking of it, to those who were to reap its fruits. He did all he could to save men, and then, in his interviews with them, spent his time in trying to persuade them to consent to be saved. His sufferings he left to tell their own story.

CHAPTER IV.

HUMAN NATURE,

OR THE SAVIOR'S RECEPTION AMONG MANKIND.

"We will not have this man to reign over us."

In the last chapter we considered our Savior simply as a Teacher; hereafter we shall have occasion to look at him more particularly as a sufferer. In the meantime, we must devote a few pages to considering the reception, which the principles of duty he inculcated meet with among men.

This brings us at once to the study of human nature; — and the way to study human nature, is to look at it as it exhibits itself in the actual conduct of mankind. If we examine it thus, we shall find it presenting itself in a great many alluring aspects Look, for instance,

The village. Morning. The wife and mother

at any of those quiet villages which may be found by thousands in every christian land. When day dawns, the gray light looks into the windows of a hundred dwellings, where honest industry has been enjoying repose. The population is grouped into families, according to the arrangement which God has made, and while the eastern sky reddens and glows by the reflection of the approaching sun, there is, in every dwelling, a mother, actively engaged in providing for the morning wants of the household which God has committed to her care. There is a tie around her heart, binding her to her husband, her children, her home, and to all the domestic duties which devolve upon her. These duties she goes on to discharge, though they are ever renewed and ever the same. She does it day after day,— three hundred and sixty-five times this year, and as many more the next, and the next, perhaps for half a century. What patience! What persevering industry! and all, not for herself, but for others.

At the proper time, all the families of the village assemble, each in its own quiet home, to receive their food. The breakfast hour for one, is the breakfast hour for all. Each conforms to the customs of the others, with as much regularity as if these customs were enforced by penal laws. Every one is at liberty, and yet, in all the important arrangements of life, they all agree. And how is this agreement produced? By the regard which every one has for the opinions and feelings of the rest; a feeling which we cannot but look upon with pleasure; and it reigns in all human communities, and has almost boundless power in regulating established customs, and preserving the order of society.

We next see our villagers going forth to their respective labors. You will observe them issuing from their various dwellings, and repairing to their work, with as much regularity as if on a preconcerted signal. The

mechanics go to their shops, the tradesman to his store, and the farmers to their fields; and though there may be here and there an exception, they continue their toil as industriously as if their motions were watched, and all their actions controlled by masters, who had the right and the power to exact from them a stated daily task. And this course of daily active industry is persevered in through life, and all the means of comfort and enjoyment, which it procures, are frugally husbanded. Sickness, death, calamity, may produce an occasional interruption, and even paralyze, for a time, all interest in worldly pursuits and duties; but the elastic spirit rises again, when the severity of pressure is removed, and again finds occupation and enjoyment in its daily routine of toil.

The moral beauty of it all consists in the fact, that each man labors thus industriously, day after day, and year after year, not mainly for himself, but for others. Each has, upon an average, four or five, who are dependants upon him, and it is for them mainly, and not for himself, that he confines himself so constantly to his daily toil.

There may be exceptions. Here and there one is idle and dissolute, leaving the inmates of his wretched home, to mourn the guilt of the husband and father, and to feel its bitter consequences. But it is only here and there one; and in almost every such case, the ills which the sufferers would otherwise have to bear, are very much alleviated by the assistance of neighbors, who cannot well enjoy their own comforts at their own homes, until they have relieved the pressure of want that is so near them. The great majority however are faithful to their trust; held to duty, not by compulsion, nor by fear of penalty, but by a tie which God has fastened round the heart, and whose control men love to obey. This is human nature

. The reader may perhaps say that there is no virtue in all this seeming benevolence, because such is the nature

of the tie, by which the father and the mother are bound to their household, that the faithful discharge of their own domestic duties is the way to secure the highest and purest happiness to themselves. It is so, undoubtedly; and it is the very moral beauty which we have been endeavoring to point out, that in a case of such universal application, the human heart is such, that it can find, and does find, its own purest and highest enjoyment, in unceasing efforts to promote the enjoyment of others.

Thus the day passes on in our peaceful, quiet village: the evening brings recreations of various kinds; some indeed seek guilty pleasures, but far the greater number find happiness at home. Night brings universal repose, the members of each family sleeping quietly under their own roof, "with none to molest or make them afraid." Or if there is a solitary one, who prowls about at midnight, to steal, or burn, or kill, he is but one among a thousand,— a rare and abhorred exception to the general rule.

Perhaps, however, under one roof there is sickness A pale and feeble child, who has been a source of unceasing anxiety and trouble to his parents, from his very birth, lies in his little couch, restless and feverish, under an attack of some new disease.

"Mother, your sleep has been disturbed enough by its restlessness and its cries. Carry it away to some remote apartment, and leave it there, to moan alone under its sufferings, so that you may sleep, for once, undisturbed. If it should die before the morning, you will only be relieved of a continual and heavy burden."

"Father, leave the little sufferer to its fate. You will then sleep quietly through the night, and the necessity for toil will be diminished on the morrow. Why should you take such pains, and bear such watching and such fatigue for this child? Even if he lives, he will never

repay you; but as soon as he becomes a man, he will go out from your roof, away into the world, and you will see him no more. Abandon the little sufferer therefore, now; — send him away to a distant room and leave him."

The proposal makes father and mother cling still more closely to their suffering child, and when at midnight every house in the village seems desolate and still, you will see from the two windows of their chamber, the glow of lamp and fire within, contrasted with the cold white light, with which the moon silvers the windows of other dwellings. In that chamber the sleepless mother watches, with love which no sacrifices can exhaust, and no protracted efforts tire. It expands to meet every emergency, and rises higher and higher, in exact proportion to the wants and sufferings of its feeble object. The light will continue at those windows, till the morning dawn extinguishes it; and as long as the loved object needs this watchfulness and care, those windows will show the same signal of sickness and suffering, as regularly and as constantly as night returns.

There is a great moral beauty in this; and in all those principles of human nature, by which heart is bound to heart, and communities are linked together, in bonds of peace and harmony, and of mutual co-operation and good will. Some persons may indeed say that there is nothing of a *moral* character in it. We will not contend for a word. There is beauty in it of some sort, it is certain, for the man who can look upon these, and similar aspects of human character, without some gratification, is not human. It is beauty of some sort, and it is not physical nor intellectual: — if any man chooses to apply some other term than *moral* to characterize it, we will not contend. At any rate, it is human nature.

But nearly all that there is which appears alluring in the above views, or any other views, which can be taken

of human nature, when left to itself, is to be resolved into two principles. And these principles are such that if virtue can be based upon them at all, it is certainly virtue of the lowest character. The principles are these. Natural Affection, and Policy; the two foundations on which rest nine-tenths of all which is called virtue in this world. There is indeed, among men, a vast amount of industry and frugality; of faithful domestic attachment, and persevering performance of the ordinary duties of life; there is honesty, and conscientiousness, and dislike of suffering, which leads to many efforts to remove or alleviate it. But after all, for we must, to be honest, come to the unpleasant conclusion, nearly the whole has its only basis in feelings of natural affection, or on views of enlightened policy. The results are beautiful; they are essential to the well-being, and almost to the existence of society, but, when we come honestly to analyze their causes, we shall see that instinctive affection and views of policy produce nearly the whole. God has taken care, so to form the human heart, and so to constitute communities, that these influences of natural affection, and these considerations of policy, shall be enough, in ordinary instances, to protect the outward frame-work of society. This outward frame-work, therefore, is sustained very well. The rest, — all that is within, the region of the *heart*, the private feelings and private conduct between man and man, he has attempted to regulate by his *law*. And what is the consequence? Why what he impels man to do, by fixed and certain constitutional tendencies, and what he makes it plainly his interest to do, that is done. But all the rest fails. His laws are broken, his authority contemned, and though the exterior fabric of society is protected, as we have seen, and presents so beautiful and imposing an aspect, the heart sickens as we look at what is within.

Take our village for instance. If we look at its exte-

rior arrangements, how fair it seems. But the reader would shut this book in displeasure at its harshness, if I were to describe, with anything like fairness, the feelings and emotions which really reign in the hearts of its inhabitants. The children all know that God their Maker has said to them, "you shall not disobey your father and mother." They care no more for it, than for the idle wind. The mother who watches over her sick child, has perhaps a heart rising against God, repining and unsubmissive. It seems to be an honest village, for the inhabitants do not rob or murder each other in the night. Honest! why there is not a man who will trust his neighbor to make a bargain between himself and him, without watching his own interests with the utmost eagerness. They seem to be benevolent; that is, they cannot bear to witness any great physical suffering, and they take measures to alleviate or remove it. Benevolent! the amount of real heartfelt benevolence among them is shown by this fact: that if any man comes forward with a plan for doing good, and asks the co-operation of his neighbors, nine out of ten of them will believe, that *his interest* is in some way or other directly connected with it, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, they will be right! Such a view of human character, on paper, is objected to, and opposed by many; but still they know that it is in fact true. They act on the presumption of its truth, in all their dealings with men; and their knowledge of mankind is abundantly sufficient to convince them, that if the hearts of the inhabitants of any village could be really unmasked, they would present such disclosures of envy, malice, strifes, selfishness, ill-will, pride and revenge, as would justify the strongest language which could possibly be used to describe them.

It is astonishing what beautiful, what admirable results, may be secured in human society, by the operation of these natural impulses and views of policy, while each

individual of the community may be the abandoned slave of sin. The following is a striking illustration of it. A man may drop a letter containing a hundred dollar bill, into any post office in the country. He slips it through a little aperture, and does not know who is on the other side. The man who takes it up is a stranger. He passes it into the hands of another stranger; and thus it goes from hand to hand, from driver to driver, and clerk to clerk, for a thousand miles, and at last his correspondent safely receives the money from some one, he knows not whom. And what has been its protection? A sheet of paper, fastened with a little colored paste: or in its condition of greatest security, a leathern bag, closed by a lock, which any stone by the side of the road would shatter to pieces. The treasure is thus carried over solitary roads, through forests, and among the mountains; and is passed from one hand to another, in a state of what would seem to be most complete exposure. What honest men these agents thus trusted, must be! is the first reflection. Honest! Why the writer of the letter would not really trust a tenth part of the sum to the honesty of a single one of them. They may be honest, or they may not, but the careless observer who should attribute the safe result to the honesty of the men, would be most grossly deceived. It is an adroit arrangement, —most admirably and skilfully planned, by human wisdom, and acting by means of principles which God has implanted,—that secures the result. The merchant trusts the money to agents whom he does not know, not because he thinks they are *honest*, but because he knows they are *wise;* he relies on human nature, but it is the shrewd policy of human nature,—not its sense of justice.

Forgetting this distinction has been the means of a great proportion of the disputes which have raged in the world about human character. In philosophizing upon the subject, a writer, of a poetic turn, is deluded by the

beauty, the moral beauty, we may perhaps safely say, of results, which really depend on very different principles in human hearts, from what they seem to indicate. They who have the most romantic ideas of human nature in theory, do not fail of being sufficiently guarded and suspicious in their dealings with mankind; or, if they do, they soon inevitably become soured by disappointed hopes, and while they panegyrize the race in the mass, they bitterly accuse and reproach it in detail. Besides, there is one proof, and that on a most extensive scale, of the real nature of worldly virtue; it is this,—a fact which no man competent to judge, will deny,—that all the arrangements of business in every community, and in every scheme of government which was ever formed by human skill, go on the plan of making it for the interest of men to do right, and not on the plan of confidence in the integrity and moral principle of their hearts. A government and a system of institutions based on the idea, that men were in a majority of cases, disposed to do their duty of their own accord, could not stand a day.

But all this is not the worst. It is not the falseness and hollowness of worldly virtues, nor the vices of heart and life which prevail every where among men, which are the great subjects of the charge which God makes against us. It is another thing altogether,—viz. that men WILL NOT SUBMIT TO THE RÉIGN OF GOD OVER THEM. This is their settled, determined, universal decision. It is called in the Bible by various names;—ungodliness, rebellion, unbelief, enmity against God, and many others. Jehovah has proclaimed a law; men disobey it altogether. They do indeed some things which are commanded in that law, but then it is only because it happens to suit their convenience. He tells us we are not our own but his;—we pay no regard to it, but go on serving ourselves. He tells us that all will soon be over with us in this world, and that in a very short time we

must stand in judgment before him. Who believes it? He charges the man of wealth to act as his Maker's steward in managing his property, and sacredly to appropriate it to his cause; the wealthy man regards it just as much as he would a similar claim from the beggar in the street. He calls upon men of rank and influence to glorify him by exhibiting pure and holy lives, in the conspicuous stations in which he has placed them; look at the princes and nobles, the legislators and statesmen of this world, and see how they obey. By his word and by his spirit, he tells us of our undying souls, of the value of holiness and spiritual peace, of the deep guilt of sin, of mercy through a Savior, and of eternal life with him in heaven; men turn away from such subjects in utter contempt. These topics whenever introduced among the vulgar classes of society, will ordinarily be received with open derision and scorn; and the refined circles of society, with as decided, though with a little more polite hostility, will not allow their introduction. There is as real, and certain, and determined a combination among men, to exclude God and his law from any actual control over human hearts, as if the standard of open rebellion was raised, and there were gathered around it all the demonstrations of physical resistance.

It is sometimes said that the reason why subjects connected with God and religion are so excluded from conversation in polite circles of society, is the fact, that when such subjects are introduced, they are so often a cloak of hypocrisy and deceit. I know it is so, and this fact constitutes the most complete and overwhelming evidence of the extent to which this world is alienated from God. Even what little professed regard there is for him here, is, two thirds of it, hypocrisy! This is, in fact, what the objection amounts to; and what a story does it tell, in regard to the place which God holds in human hearts. No. As men have generally made up their minds to have

nothing to do with God, they are determined to hear nothing about him, unless it be in such general terms, and in such formal ways, as shall not be in danger of making an impression. We may almost wonder how eternal justice can spare this earth from day to day, when we reflect upon what is unquestionably the awful fact, that throughout all those countries where the true God is known, in four cases out of five in which his name is mentioned at all, it is used in oaths and blasphemies.

The world has been full of religions, it is true: but they have been the schemes of designing men, to gain an ascendency over the ignorant, by deceiving and bribing that conscience which God has placed in every heart to testify for him. It has been the studied aim of these religions to evade the obligation of moral law, and the authority of a pure, and holy and spiritual Deity. They substitute for it empty rites and ceremonies, in order to divert the attention of the sentry which God has stationed in the soul, while all the unholy lusts and passions are left unrestrained. The Pharisees gave a specimen which will answer for all. Unjust and cruel towards men, unfaithful and unbelieving towards God, and habitually violating and trampling under foot the whole spirit of his law, they would go out into their gardens, and carefully take one tenth of every little herb which grew there; and this they would carry with ridiculous solemnity, to the Temple of God, to show their exact observance of his commands! This is an admirable example of the spirit and nature of all false religions. Men will do any thing else but really give themselves up to God. They will go barefooted to Jerusalem, for the sake of being sainted on their return: they will fight under the crescent for plunder or military renown; they will build churches and contribute money to public charities, from a hundred different motives; but as to coming and really believing all that God has said, and giving up the whole

soul to him, entering his service, and looking forward habitually to heaven as their home, *they will not do it.* It has been proposed to them again and again, in every variety of mode, and THEY WILL NOT DO IT. The prophets proposed it. Men stoned them. Jesus Christ proposed it. They crucified him. The apostles and their immediate successors proposed it. In the course of a very few generations they succeeded in bribing them, by means of worldly rewards and honors, to pervert their message, and leave the world undisturbed in its sins.

The preceding chapter of this work opened, perhaps the reader thought, a very broad door of salvation, and would lead one to ask, who can help being saved. It was indeed a wide door; one which all might enter; the condition simple, and universally proclaimed. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon." "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him." But the difficulty is, that, widely extended as the gates of salvation are, and simple as is the entrance, men WILL NOT COME IN. They do not wish to be saved, and they will not seek salvation. They do not love holiness; they do not like the idea of serving God: penitence, humility, broken hearted submission to God's will, and spiritual peace and happiness, they do not like. They want to be making money, or gaining admiration, or enjoying sensual pleasure; and persuasion is not merely insufficient to change them,—it does not even tend to change. You cannot change the *desires and affections of the heart* by persuasion. No; plain, and simple, and open to every man, as is the way of life, men choose another way, and if the few imperfect exceptions which exist, were not accounted for in the Bible, we should be utterly unable to account for them at all; so fixed, and settled, and

universal a characteristic it is of human nature, to wish to have, in this life, as little as possible to do with God and eternity. Even the little love to God and submission to him which exists, is so adulterated that it scarce deserves the name. The enemies of religion know this very well. They charge us with selfishness and ambition and party spirit, as the real springs of a large portion of our pretended efforts in behalf of religion. And they are right. We deny it in our eager controversies with our foes, but every true Christian acknowledges and bewails it in his closet before God.

We see thus that the great, the destroying guilt of human souls, is not open vice and crime, but determined and persevering alienation from God. The question whether a person becomes vicious and criminal depends almost entirely upon circumstances. A child brought up in the cabin of a smuggler, or on board a piratical ship, will almost inevitably become a robber or murderer; while on the other hand, the son of christian parents, who is trained up properly in a christian land, will almost as inevitably learn to respect and obey the laws. But though they may thus widely differ in external conduct, they may both reject, with equal determination, all the authority of God over them. Both are equally under the control of a worldly spirit, though they gratify this spirit in different ways.

Whenever we carry the law of God to human souls, and bring home to the conscience and the heart, the summons to surrender to it, it meets, from all the varieties of human character, with substantially the same reception. Take it to savages on their remote island. Explain the law to them, show its moral perfection; offer them forgiveness for the past if they will now subdue their passions, and cease their murderous quarrels, and give themselves up to the service of the pure and holy

Spirit, and become like him, pure, and holy, and merciful and kind. Will they obey?

Come then to a christian land, and collect an assembly of children. Describe to them the cold, cheerless misery of sin; call their attention to the secret corrodings of remorse, which they all suffer every day. Remind them of their ingratitude and disobedience to their parents, and their neglect of God; tell them how rapidly time is flying, and how soon they must appear before their Maker. Describe the moral beauty of a holy character,—pure, docile, faithful, grateful to father and mother, and filled with affection for God,—the soul resigned and submissive to his will, and happy in a sense of his forgiveness and protection. Then ask them to come and give themselves to their Savior, and to begin lives of purity and duty and holiness. What will they do? They will sit still while you speak, if they have been trained to sit still on such occasions, and perhaps a few may listen with real attention; but after you have finished all you have to say, they will go away with hearts as cold towards God as if they had been indurating under the influence of sin for a hundred years.

Take younger children then. Here is a little one, just able to run about the floor and talk, and it yet knows little or nothing about God. It obeys its mother's express commands, because it finds from experience that some unpleasant consequences will ensue if it does not, and its obedience is just in proportion to the certainty of these consequences. Call this child to you now, and tell it of duties and obligations to God. Try to awaken gratitude, filial love, and willingness to obey him. Try in a word to establish an acquaintance and communion of feeling between its heart, and the unseen, eternal spirit around it, and to awaken gratitude for his favors, and a desire to please him and to do his will. And what will be your success? Why you may excite surprise;

you may arrest a momentary attention, you may awaken awe and even terror, by bringing death and a coming judgment to view. But to link that heart by any substantial tie, to its maker and benefactor, and kindest and dearest friend, will baffle all your powers.

Make the experiment then upon a maturer mind. Here is a wealthy merchant, engaged in business, which abundant prosperity from God has brought before him. In order that there may be nothing exceptionable in the form and manner in which his duty as a child of God is brought before him, we will suppose that he is sick, and has sent for his pastor to come and visit him. Let this pastor explain what is meant by the requisition of the Bible, that a man of wealth should feel that his wealth is not his own, but that he holds it as steward,—agent;—and that he is bound to be faithful to the trust committed to him. He knows very well what are the duties of trustee. He understands the distinction between agent and principal; so that no long explanation is necessary. Let the pastor simply call his attention to the point, and bring home to his mind the nearness of eternity, the inconceivable importance of the salvation of his soul, and that of his workmen, his clerks, his salesmen, his navigators; and plead with him to come out honestly and openly and with all his heart, on the side of God and holiness;—to let his light shine;—and to devote every thing he has to the work of helping forward God's cause in the world. Suppose this experiment were to be tried, who that knows mankind will doubt about the result. One half the christian pastors in the world would be so convinced of its hopelessness, that they would not make the attempt. They would not ask, plainly and directly, a worldly man under such circumstances, to give himself up to God. And if they should bring the question forward, plainly and faithfully, and in all its honest truth, instead of winning new con-

verts to God, they would, in nine cases out of ten, in any commercial city in Christendom, excite high displeasure, and very likely never be able to gain admission to the bedside again. Worldly men are very willing to sustain the external institutions of religion, and to assemble on the Sabbath from time to time, to hear praises of the moral virtues, or discussions of the abstract excellences of religion. But you cannot take such a text as this, "YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN, YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE, THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODIES AND IN YOUR SPIRITS WHICH ARE GOD'S:" and fairly bring it before men's consciences and hearts, so that they shall really understand its meaning, without awakening strong opposition or dislike. It is opposition and dislike to something. *They* say it is not enmity against God. But that certainly looks very much like enmity against God and his government, which is excited by the presentation of the very fundamental principle of all his laws.

But do not let us despair. There may be some one yet, who will admit God, though all these have rejected him. Here is an amiable and gentle girl; obedient to her parents, faithful in many of her duties, affectionate, kind. Let us bring to her the invitation to come into the kingdom of heaven. Exemplary as she is in external conduct, she knows very well that her heart would not bear exposure. Envy, self-will, jealousy, pride, often reign there. She knows it; she feels it, and her conscience being still tender, these sins often destroy her peace. Tell her that divine grace will help her to subdue these, her enemies. She sometimes looks forward to future life, and sighs to think how soon it will pass away. Tell her that piety will dispel the darkness that hangs over the grave, and open immortality to her view. She thinks of future trials and difficulties and dangers, with dread. Tell her that the Savior is ready to guide her and be her friend; to protect and bless her at all

times, to give her employment, and to be her reward. Spread the whole subject out before her, and urge her to come and give herself up to God and save her soul. She listens to you with respectful, and perhaps even with pleased attention. Do not be deceived by it. She is, at heart, tired and sick of the gloomy subject. She might like perhaps protection and happiness, but her heart revolts against God and holiness, and you might as well talk to the deaf adder as talk to her.

Or if her heart is not entirely braced up and hardened in its determination to have nothing to do with God and religion,—if she is really willing to listen and to read,—she is still just as obstinately determined *not to obey*. She is called perhaps a religious inquirer. She reads the Bible, and offers a daily prayer, and takes an interest in religious instruction; but her secret motive is *to keep religion within her reach*, because she dares not let it go altogether. She is still determined not to give up herself to it. She can love her parents, her brothers and sisters, but her heart is cold and hard against God; and do all you can to persuade her to come out openly and honestly and cordially on his side, she is fixed, immovably fixed, in refusing to do it. Her religious friends think she is very near the kingdom of heaven. And in one sense, she is near. She stands at the very gate of the celestial city. All obstacles are removed: she can look in and see the happy mansions and the golden streets. The simple difficulty is, that *she will not enter*. If you urge her, she tries to perplex you with metaphysical speculations, or listens in respectful silence, and goes away and continues in sin exactly as before.

And thus it is all over the world. There are many beautiful moral exhibitions to be seen here; many admirable results; many alluring aspects of human nature. But after all, any honest observer must see, that between mankind and God their Maker, there is

a deep and settled and universal disagreement. They would be willing that God should rule over them, if he would leave them pretty much to themselves. But this *he* will not do. His very first and most emphatic command is, "THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND THY NEIGHBOR AS THYSELF;" and this *they* will not do. It is their fixed, their settled, their unchanging determination that they will not do it.

Perhaps I ought not to call it a determination; for it is rather a feeling than a determination,— a disrelish for holiness and the spiritual enjoyment of loving and serving God. The heart, sensitive as it is in regard to its own rights and interests, is cold and torpid in regard to its Maker's claims. Motive will not act upon it. Persuasion has no effect, for there is no feeling for persuasion to take hold of. Argument does no good, for though you may convince the understanding without much difficulty, the heart remains insensible and cold; — *dead*, as the Bible terribly expresses it,— dead in trespasess and sins. This coldness and insensibility of the heart towards God, lead to all sorts of sinfulness in conduct. It takes off restraint, gives up the soul to unholy feelings, increases the power of temptation, and thus leaves the soul the habitual slave of sin. These overt acts are the effects, not the cause, and he who hopes to be morally renewed, must not look directly and mainly to his moral conduct, and endeavor to rectify that; but he must look deeper; he must examine his heart, and expect no real success which does not proceed from the warmth of spiritual life springing up there.

I presume that a large portion of the readers of this chapter, will be persons who feel, in some degree, the value and the necessity of piety, and they are perhaps actually reading this book with a vague sort of wish to meet with something in it, which will help them to find salvation The book can do this only by showing you

the real difficulty;— which is that you do not sincerely wish for salvation. "Cease to do evil, ask forgiveness in the name of Christ for the evil you have done, and henceforth openly serve God." These are certainly directions which it is easy for you to understand, and easy to practise. The difficulty is, a heart which will not comply. There is a moral obligation to comply, which the understanding admits, but which the heart does not feel; and a moral beauty in complying, which it does not perceive.

This is spiritual blindness. And yet, simple as it seems, a large portion, even of those who call themselves religious inquirers, have very little conception of what spiritual blindness is. It is insensibility to spiritual things, a dulness of moral perception, such that sin, though it is intellectually perceived, makes no impression, and holiness, though the word is understood, awakens no feeling of its excellence and beauty in the heart. I can best illustrate it by a simple case, such as parents often have occasion to observe.

A noisy boy, three or four years old, was once running about the house, disturbing very much, by his rattling playthings and his loud outcries, a sick mother, in a chamber above stairs. I called him to me, and something like the following dialogue ensued.*

"Where is your mother?"

"She is sick up stairs."

"Is she? I am sorry she is sick."

A pause.

* As the reader proceeds through the dialogue, we wish he would recollect that the case is not brought forward to illustrate the general character of children. That is not our present subject. The story is told merely to illustrate the nature of blindness to spiritual things; and though true, it would have answered our purpose just as well, if it had been entirely imaginary. Children generally, or at least often, have a very keen sensibility to the guilt of ingratitude.

"Were you ever sick?"

"Yes. I was sick once," said he, and he began to rattle his little feet upon the chair, and to move about in a restless manner, as if he wished to get down.

"Oh you must sit still a moment," said I, "I want to talk with you a little more. When were you sick?"

"Oh, I dont know."

"What did your mother do for you, when you was sick?"

"Oh she rocked me in the cradle."

"Did she?— did she rock you? I am glad she was so kind. I suppose you liked to be rocked. Did she give you anything to drink?"

"Yes sir."

"Did she make a noise to trouble you?"

"No sir, she did not make any noise."

"Well, she was very kind to you. I think you ought to be kind to her, now she is sick. You cannot rock her in the cradle, because she is too old to be rocked, but you can be gentle and still, and that she will like very much."

"Oh but," said the boy in a tone of confidence, as if what he was saying was perfectly conclusive and satisfactory, "I want to ride my horse a little more."

So saying, he struggled to get free, that he might resume his noisy sport. Probably nearly all the parents who read this dialogue, will remember, as they read it, many similar attempts which they have made, to lead a little child *to perceive the moral beauty of gratitude*, and to yield their hearts to its influence. But the child will not see or feel. It understands the terms;— it remembers its own sickness and its mother's kindness;— it knows that its mother is now sick, and that its noisy plays produce inconvenience and suffering; but every attempt to lead it to look at all these things in connexion, and to perceive and feel its own *ingratitude*, are vain.

It has no perception of it, no sensibility to it. "I want to ride my horse a little more," is the idea that fills its whole soul; and duty, gratitude, obligation are unfelt and unseen.

It is thus with you, my irreligious reader. Your heart has no spiritual perception of the guilt of ingratitude towards God, and the moral beauty and excellence of obedience to his law. You can look at the law, at God's character, at your own sins, at all the declarations of the Bible, but you do not feel their moral weight. The carnal, that is, the worldly mind, does not know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Objects of natural beauty may be seen in the same manner, and yet not appreciated. A traveller on horseback, emerges from the wood, on the declivity of a mountain, and there suddenly bursts upon his view, a widely extended prospect of fertile valleys, and winding streams, and fields waving with corn; farmhouses and smiling villages giving life to the scene. He stops to gaze at it with delight. His horse looks at it too, and sees it all as distinctly as his rider does. The fields look as green, and the groves as shady, and the streams glisten with as bright a reflection to one as to the other. But while the man gazes upon it with emotions of delight, the animal looks idly on, pleased with nothing but his moment's rest. All that is visible comes equally to both; but beauty is felt, not seen. Though the eye may bring in those combinations of form and color, which are calculated to awaken the emotion, there must be a heart to feel, within,— or all will be mere vision;— cold, lifeless, stupid, vision.

It is so with spiritual perception. You, my reader, may understand the gospel most thoroughly,— you may have studied the Bible with diligence and care, and may see clearly and distinctly all its truths; but there is a moral and spiritual meaning and power in them, to which

the heart, while it remains worldly, remains utterly insensible. It does not see, it does not feel them.

I know of nothing which more forcibly illustrates the cold insensibility of men to all that relates to God and holiness, and the salvation of the soul, than the trains of reflection which the unsanctified heart falls into, in its languid efforts to bring itself under religious influence. Let us take one case as a specimen of tens of thousands. The subject is a moral, upright young man, with an honest respect for religon, and a distinct understanding of its truths. He has been taught his duty from early infancy, and has at length left his father's roof, to come out into the world; and as he has not espoused his Savior's cause, his conscience keeps up a perpetual murmur, which makes him restless and dissatisfied, and destroys his peace. He has, all the time, a resolution carefully laid up in his mind, that he will become a Christian before long. This makes him feel as though he was keeping salvation within his reach, and helps a little to quiet conscience. He has lately resumed the habit, which he was early taught to establish, of reading a portion of scripture before he retires to rest. This duty he generally performs, though in a cold and heartless manner, so that it does not in the least interfere with his leading, day after day, a life of irreligion and sin. In fact he would be ashamed to have it known that he reads the Bible every day.

He has just finished his chapter, and is sitting in his armed chair before the dying embers of his evening fire. He is alone, and it is near midnight. He walks to the window and looks for a few moments into the clear, cold sky, and a slight emotion swells in his heart, as he thinks of the boundless distance, and inconceivable magnitude of the stars he sees there. The feeling is mingled with a sort of poetic wish that he had a friend in the mighty Maker of them He soon gets into a contemplative

mood, and sits down again in his armed chair before the fire, where a train of thought something like the following passes in his mind. I insert it, not for its dignity, or its good taste, but because it is true to human nature.

THE THOUGHTFUL SINNER'S SOLILOQUY.

"Oh, I do wish I was a Christian. I *must* attend to the subject. I am now twenty-five, and half mankind do not live to be fifty, so that probably I am more than half through life.—I should like to know exactly what my chance of life is. They say the insurance companies can tell exactly;—wonder how they calculate.—

"But I wish I was a Christian. I do not know how to repent. I will confess all my sins now, and try to feel penitence for them. I will begin back in infancy. That lie I told to my father about the book. Charles Williams sat on the same seat with me then.—Wonder where he is now."

Here he gets into a reverie, about home and scenes of childhood; presently he rises up and sighs, and begins to walk back and forth across the floor.

"Oh dear, how hard it is to confine my thoughts. Strange;—going to judgment,—all my sins recorded,—coming up against me, and I have no heart to repent of them. Can see them, but can't feel.—Mr. W's sermon was not very clear. I do not understand how the judgment will be arranged. Take a great deal of time.—Bible says Christ will judge the world.

"But I *must* become a Christian.—And yet if I should, I must make a profession of religion.—Very public.—What would they all say? —— ——."

Here he stops to look out of the window, and seems lost, for a few moments, in vacancy.

"Wonder who is sick in that house;—bright light. How should I feel if I was taken sick to-night, and knew I was going to die?—The time *will* come.

"But my sins.—Let me see;—I disobeyed my father and mother a great many times; I used to take their things without leave, too.—Stealing, that?—no,—not stealing, exactly. Why not? Let me see.——"

He speculates a few minutes on this question of casuistry, and then sighs deeply as he finds his thoughts wandering again, and makes another desperate effort to bring them back.

"Oh! how I wish I could really feel my sins. I will pray to God to forgive them, and then go to bed; I will sit down in my armed chair and pray.

"*Oh God, look down in mercy, and forgive all my sins. I confess I have been a great sinner——I have,——I am a great sinner,—I,——*(musing)—*I*——that's a beautiful blue flame;——some chemical substance in the coals,—azure——(musing)——*O my God, forgive me, and enable me to repent of all my sins*;—beautiful;—what a singular thing flame is,—distinct shape, but no substance.

"O! how my thoughts will wander. I wish I could confine them. What shall I do? I will go to bed; and pray there; posture is of no consequence."

He lies down and begins again to call for forgiveness, but very soon loses himself in a dreamy reverie, which terminates in a few moments, in sleep.

As I have been writing the above, I have been on the point, again and again, of drawing my pen over the whole, as a wrong species of composition to introduce into such a work as this. But it tells the truth. Many of my readers will see their own faces reflected in it; for as in water, face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man. And it shows the real difficulty in the way of salvation,—a heart cold, insensible and callous; unbelief almost entirely darkening the soul, and pride destroying the effect of the little light which gains admission.

The difficulty seems hopeless, too: that is, so far as human means will go towards removing it. Every thing fails. In the hands of the Spirit of God, as we shall hereafter show, every thing does indeed, at times, succeed; but in its ordinary operation, every means and every influence which can be brought to bear upon the human heart, fails of awakening it. You cannot possibly have a stronger case to present to men, than the claims of God's law, and you cannot have a case in which argument, and eloquence, and instruction, and persuasion, if left to themselves, will be more utterly useless and vain. It is a common opinion among men, who are aware that all this is true in regard to their own hearts, that the coldness and insensibility which they feel, will be dispelled by some future providence of God. They think that affliction will soften them, or sickness break the ties of earth, or approaching death arouse them to vigorous effort to flee from the wrath to come. But alas, there is little hope here. Affliction does good to the friends of God, but it imbitters and hardens his enemies. Sickness stupifies, and pain distracts; and approaching death, though it may alarm and terrify the soul which is unprepared for it, seldom melts the heart to penitence and love. I will describe a case,— it is a specimen of examples so numerous, that every village and neighborhood in our land might appropriate it, and every clergyman who reads it, might almost think I took it from his own journal.

A few years since, when spending a sabbath in a beautiful country town, I was sent for to visit a sick man who was apparently drawing near the grave. I was told, as I walked with the neighbor who came for me, towards the house of the patient, that he was in a melancholy state of mind.

"He has been," said he, "a firm believer and supporter of the truths of religion, for many years. He

has been very much interested in maintaining religious worship, and all benevolent institutions; he has loved the sabbath school, and given his family every religious privilege. But he says he has never really given his heart to God. He has been devoted to the world, and even now, he says, it will not relinquish its hold."

"Do you think," said I, "that he must die?"

"Yes," replied he, "he must die, and he is fully aware of it. He says that he can see his guilt and danger, but that his hard heart will not *feel*."

This is the exact remark which is made in thousands and thousands of similar cases, and in almost precisely the same language. The eyes are opened, but the heart remains unchanged.

We at length approached the house. It was in the midst of a delightful village, and in one of those calm, still, summer afternoons, when all nature seems to speak from every tree, and leaf, and flower, of the goodness of God; and to breathe the spirit of repose and peace. I wondered that a man could lie on his bed, with windows all around him opening upon such a scene as this, and yet not feel.

As I entered the sick room, the pale and emaciated patient turned towards me an anxious and agitated look, which showed too plainly what was passing within. It was a case of consumption. His sickness had been long and lingering, as if by the gradual manner in which he had been drawn away from life, God had been endeavoring to test by experiment, the power of approaching death to draw the heart towards him. His strength was now almost gone, and he lay gasping for the breath which his wasted lungs could not receive. His eye moved with a quick and anxious glance around the room, saying, by its expression of bright intelligence, that the mind retained undiminished power.

I tried to bring to his case, those truths which I thought

calculated to influence him, and lead him to the Savior; but he knew all that I could tell him, and I learned from his replies, given in panting whispers, that religious truth had been trying its whole strength upon him all his life, and that in presenting it to him again now, I was only attempting once more, an experiment, which had been repeated in vain, almost every day, for forty years. I saw the utter hopelessness of effort, and stood by his bed-side in silent despair. He died that night.

My reader, if your heart is cold and hard towards God, abandon all hope that the alarm and anxiety of a death-bed will change it. Seek moral renewal and forgiveness now.

CHAPTER V.

PUNISHMENT.

OR THE CONSEQUENCES OF HUMAN GUILT.

"He will miserably destroy those wicked men."

THERE are perhaps one thousand millions of men upon the earth at this time, of which probably nine hundred and ninety-nine millions entertain the feelings towards God which are described in the last chapter, and act accordingly. The question at once arises, what will God do with them.

The reader will perhaps recollect, that in the first chapter of this work, when considering the character of the Deity, we found that one of its most prominent traits, is determined decision in the execution of law. This is a trait which shows itself as conspicuously in all nature around us, as it does in the declarations of the Bible;

but one which unfortunately is not very popular in this world. Efficiency in government is popular or unpopular according to the character of the individual who judges of it. An efficient administration secures protection and happiness to the good, but to the bad, it brings suffering, and perhaps destruction. It is natural, therefore, that the latter should be very slow to praise the justice which they fear; and in this world, there is so large a portion upon whom God's efficiency as a moral Governor will bear very heavily, that the whole subject is exceedingly unpopular among mankind.

It is curious to observe how men's estimates of the same conduct vary according to the way in which they are themselves to be affected by it; for nothing is more admired and applauded among men, than efficiency in the execution of law, in all cases where they are themselves safe from its penalties. There have been great disputes in respect to the bounds which ought to be assigned to political governments, or, in other words, the degree of power which the magistrate ought to possess. But within these bounds,—in the exercise of this power, —every body admires and praises firmness, energy and inflexible decision. Nobody objects except the criminal who has to suffer for the safety of the rest. He always protests against it.

About fifty years ago an English clergyman of elevated rank and connexions, and of high literary reputation, committed forgery. The law of England says that the forger must die. Now England is a highly commercial country, and all the transactions of business there, connected with the employment, and the sustenance and the property of millions and millions, entirely depend upon confidence in the truth of a written signature. Destroy the general confidence in the identity of a man's handwriting in signing his name, and all the business of the island would be embarrassed or stopped, and universal

Severe punishment.	Necessity for it.	Alternative.

confusion, distress and ruin would follow in a day. The man therefore, who counterfeits a signature in such a country, points his dagger at the very vital organs of society.

The law of England does right, therefore, in affixing a very severe penalty to the crime of forgery, not for the purpose of revenging itself on the hapless criminal, but for the sake of protecting that vast amount of property, and those millions of lives, which are dependant upon the general confidence in the writing of a name. It is a sad thing for a clergyman of refined and cultivated mind to pass through the scenes which such a law prepared for him. Consternation, when detected; long hours of torturing suspense, before his trial; indescribable suffering when, on being brought to the bar, he saw the proof brought out, step by step, clearly against him, and witnessed the unavailing efforts of his counsel to make good his defence; and the sinking of spirit, like death itself, while the judge pronounced the sentence which sealed his awful fate. Then he is remanded to prison, to spend some days or weeks in uninterrupted and indescribable agony, until his faculties become bewildered and overpowered by the influence of horror and despair; and he walks out at last, pale, trembling, and haggard in look, to finish his earthly sufferings by the convulsive struggles of death. Sad consequences these, we admit, although they come only upon one;—and all for just affixing another man's name to a piece of paper, without any intention of defrauding anybody! For it is highly probable that in this case, as in many similar ones, the criminal meant, in mercantile language, to have taken up the paper before it fell due. In fact he must have designed this, for this would be the only way to escape certain detection. Awful results, we admit, for a sin so quickly, and so thoughtlessly committed; but not so sad as it would be to let the example go on,—until the frequency

of forgery should destroy all mutual confidence between man and man, and business be stopped, and millions of families be reduced to beggary. Better that here and there a violator of the law should suffer its penalties, than that the foundations of society should be sapped, and the whole structure tumble into ruin. The question, therefore, for the government of that island, was simply this; will you be firm, notwithstanding individual suffering, in executing the law, or will you yield, and take the consequences? If you yield, you open the flood-gates of crime and suffering upon the country; and there will be no place to stop, if you once give way to crime, till the land becomes one wide-spread scene of desolation,—famine raging in every hamlet,—banditti lurking in the valleys or riding in troops upon the highways—and wretched mothers with their starving babes, roaming through the streets of desolated London, in a fruitless search for food. That was the question; and the energetic government of the country understood it so. The unhappy criminal gave every indication of penitence. He was universally believed to be truly penitent then, and is universally believed to have been so, now. All England too, with one voice, sent in earnest petitions for his pardon. But it was in vain. The British ministry understood their duty better, and though it was perhaps as painful a duty as a government ever had to discharge, they were firm, unyielding to the last. They gave him neither pardon nor reprieve; and though they would probably have submitted to almost any personal suffering, to save him, they were compelled to leave him to drink to the full, the bitter consequences of his sin.

There were thousands and thousands of petitioners in his favor, overcome by compassion for the man. The tide of popular feeling was altogether against the government then, for men generally are weak minded, inefficient, yielding, when the performance of duty is painful. But

since the time has gone by, and the momentary weakness of the occasion has passed away, there has been as strong a tide of public approbation in their favor. In fact this so conspicuous and so terrible a case of sin and suffering, has made a permanent impression, not only upon England, but upon the whole civilized world. Every man feels it. He may not trace back the feeling to its origin, but it is undoubtedly, in a very great degree, owing to this, and precisely similar transactions, that that distinct, that almost indelible impression has been made upon the community, and is handed down from generation to generation, which connects in every mind, such strong and mysterious associations of sacredness with the signature of the written name. From that day to this, every writer who has commented upon the transaction, while he has many expressions of sympathy for the suffering, has a far more emphatic tribute of praise for the inflexible firmness and decision which refused to relieve it.

Undoubtedly all my readers see this in the same light. We are, in a great measure, incapacitated from regarding some transactions, analogous to this, in a correct manner, on account of their coming too near to ourselves;—but this one can be understood; its moral bearings and relations are seen as they are, without distortion; and the simple fact which enables us to take the view of this subject which truth and justice present, is this, — we have not committed forgery ourselves. Suppose there had been in the prison where this unhappy criminal was confined, a room full of other forgers, and their opinion had been asked about the justice or the necessity of condemning him. Could they be made to understand it? No; they would be vociferous in their outcries at the unjust severity of inflicting such protracted and terrible suffering for so little a sin. We however can understand it, for we are impartial observers We have not com-

Points illustrated.	Time spent in sin.	Fifteen seconds.

mitted the crime, and we consequently have nothing to fear from sustaining the law. We rather see the value of an efficient administration of justice, in the protection it affords to our rights, and the addition it makes to our happiness. I have accordingly taken this case to present to my readers, to illustrate four or five points, which we can see more plainly than when we look at them directly in the government of God. As I enumerate the points which such a case illustrates, let the reader listen to the voice of reason and conscience within, and he will find that it testifies in their favor.

1. The time spent in committing the sin, has nothing to do with the just duration of the punishment of it. It took Dr. Dodd fifteen seconds, to write Lord Chesterfield's name. He suffered indescribable agony for many months, and was then blotted from existence for it. He would have lived perhaps forty years. So that here, for a sin of fifteen seconds, justice took forty years in penalty. She took more; for he would have been glad to have exchanged death for forty years of exile and suffering. In fact he petitioned for such a commutation.

Some one may say that I fix too small a time for the commission of the sin;— that he spent many hours and perhaps days in devising his plans, and practising his counterfeit signature, and getting his bond drawn, and that his guilt was extended over all these. His *guilt* was, to be sure, but he was not punished for guilt. He was punished for *crime*. If the last fatal act had not been performed, he would not have committed any offence against human law. God might have punished him, but man would not;— so that, strictly and fairly, the fifteen seconds spent in delineating the letters of his pupil's name, was the whole. For a sin of fifteen seconds, then, there followed a penalty worse than suffering for forty years, and mankind have, by common consent, from that day to this, pronounced the punishment just

2. Desert of punishment does not depend upon intention to do injury. The forger in this case, had not the least intention of doing injury. He could not have had such an intention, for Lord Chesterfield could not have been called upon to pay the bond without causing instant detection. This fact however was no reason why he should go free. The question was not what injury he intended to commit, but what injury really would follow, if his crime should go unpunished.

3. Desert of punishment does not depend upon the immediate consequences of the sin. The evil of sin consists not in the direct injury of the single transgression, but in the ruinous effects to the community, when it is allowed to go unpunished. The only direct injury which could have resulted from this crime was the loss of £4000 by one individual. Fifty times that sum might probably have been raised to save his life, but it would have been unavailing. He was executed, not for putting to hazard the £4000, but for endangering the vital interests of an immense community. The £4000 has nothing to do with the case. It would have been the same, if it had been £40. The sin was the *forgery*, not the endangering of four thousand pounds.

Men are always estimating their guilt, by the time employed in committing the sin, or by the direct consequences resulting from it; and fancy they deserve but little punishments, because they think that their transgressions have occupied but little time, and can of themselves do no great, immediate injury.

4. Desert of punishment does not depend upon the degree of distinctness with which the consequences are foreseen. The criminal here, had no idea that he was involving himself in such dreadful difficulty; but this inconsideration was no admissible plea.

Hearts in this world which give themselves up to sin, are unconcerned about its guilt, and have no idea of the

awful consequences which are to ensue; but this will not,— cannot alter those consequences.

5. The object of punishment is not revenge against the individual. Nobody felt any sentiment of revenge against the individual here. There was one common and universal effort to save him,— and that by the very community which alone could suffer injury from his crime. The government would most gladly have pardoned him, if they could have done it safely. No one wanted him to suffer. The only reason for it was, that the suffering of the criminal in such a case, can alone arrest the consequences of the sin. In many and many an instance, has the chief magistrate of a state had the strength of his moral principle tried to the utmost, by the importunities of a whole community, and more than all the rest, of the wretched wife and children of the criminal. A weak man, in such a case, will yield. His desire to save individual suffering, will induce him to take a step which will hazard all that society holds most dear. Instead of any feelings of resentment against the individual to urge him on, there is a deep emotion of compassion for him, to keep him back; so that if he is firm and does his duty, it must be because moral principle carries him forward, against the strong tide of feeling with which his heart pleads for the life of a fellow creature.

So with God. If any of us should be so happy, as, after finishing our pilgrimage in this vale of tears, to be admitted to the happy home in the skies, God will assuredly protect us for ever from the sins and the sinners which have brought so much misery here. He will be firm and unyielding, in the execution of his law; but he will feel for the sufferings he must not relieve. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

6. The object of punishment on the other hand, is, a moral impression upon the community, designed to

arrest the ruinous consequences of the sin. We have seen under the last head, that it is not resentment against the individual. The forger knew it was not, in his case, resentment that stood in the way of his pardon; and in his petitions, he made no effort to remove any feeling against him personally, but to show how the necessary moral impression might be made without his death. The following paragraph from a petition he offered to the king, shows this.

"I confess the crime, and own the enormity of its consequences, and the danger of its example. Nor have I the confidence to petition for impunity; but humbly hope, that public security may be established, without the spectacle of a clergyman dragged through the streets to a death of infamy, amidst the derision of the profligate and profane: and that justice may be satisfied with irrevocable exile, perpetual disgrace, and hopeless penury."

It is evident from this, what object the petitioner supposed it to be, which required his death. And in his effort to avoid death, his plan was to show that the proper moral impression might be made on the community without it, so as, in his own words, "*to establish the public security*" — "*to satisfy justice;*" expressions which are almost precisely those used by religious writers in describing God's design in punishing sin, and which are spurned by the disbelievers in a judgment to come, as expressions having no meaning, or else signifying something unjust or absurd. "*To satisfy justice;*" — a metaphorical expression certainly, but one which any man can understand if he will. The great English philologist, for it was Dr. Johnson who penned this petition for the unhappy criminal, will hardly be charged with using under such circumstances, unmeaning, or unintelligible language. If the man had been pardoned, a violence would have been done to the sense of justice which reigns in every man's bosom, which would have worked

incalculable injury. It would have undermined the authority of law, and brought down the standard of moral obligation, and every man would have felt, as soon as the excitement of the occasion was past, that the firm foundations of commercial confidence throughout the empire, had been rendered insecure.

The object then, in endeavoring to procure pardon, was to devise some way to prevent these evils, without the death of the criminal, — some way to satisfy justice, — and sustain law, — and make the moral impression, which the government well knew would be made by the destruction of the man. No such way could be found, and the poor criminal had to submit to his fate.

What this poor sufferer's learned and eloquent advocate failed to find, for him, Jesus Christ our Savior succeeded in finding for us;—a way by which to satisfy justice, and sustain law, and make a moral impression, which should arrest the sad consequences of guilt, and render it safe that we should be forgiven. We shall consider this however more fully in the sequel.

7. The necessity of punishment is not diminished by the penitence of the sinner. All mankind know and admit this, excepting in their own case. Then they always have an undefined, but a fixed impression that penitence settles the whole difficulty. There is perhaps, as great evidence of this forger's penitence, as there can be, in such a case; but penitence, however deep and however sincere, could have no power to arrest the consequences which the community must suffer from unpunished crime. If the gratification of personal resentment against the criminal had been the reason for insisting on the penalty of violated law, then repentance would have been a valid plea, as it would have removed all personal resentment, and turned human sympathy in his favor. Repentance always increases the desire to forgive, but it never of itself opens

the way. That is the distinction. I repeat it; it does a great deal towards making pardon *desirable;* but alone, it does nothing towards making it *safe.* That is, it does nothing towards making that impression on the community which the connexion of crime with suffering always makes, and which is necessary in order to arrest the ruinous consequences of sin. If, then, the question of pardon came up at all, in the British cabinet, the stronger the evidence was, that the criminal was sorry for his sin, the more painful would the duty of insisting on justice be; but the necessity of performing the duty, would remain unchanged.

We have taken this case, because it is well known, and because the common sense of mankind, from that day to this, has pronounced but one decision upon it. The inferences which we have drawn out from it, might be almost equally well illustrated by any case of sin and punishment, which takes place in any government, parental or political. These truths are so plain, that no man can or will deny them, excepting in his own case, or in some case which comes so near him as to bias his feelings. They are the principles which the Bible declares will guide Jehovah in his administration. The punishment due to trangression will not be regulated by the briefness of the time spent in the commission of the sin; — it will not be measured by the smallness of the immediate injury; — the sinner may have had no intention to invade the peace and happiness of God's great family; — he may have been entirely unaware of the consequences which were to follow; — he may be overwhelmed with consternation and sorrow when he finds what the bitter fruits must be: — he may offer reparation, a hundred fold; — but all in vain. Even repentance, sincere and humble repentance, will be insufficient to save him. For it is not personal resentment against the individual, nor desire to repair the immediate injury effected

by the specific sin, which leads to the infliction of the penalty. If it were, repentance would remove the one, and a comparatively slight effort, effect the other. But it is not these. It is that sin, that evil and bitter thing, wherever it comes, blights, and destroys. Just so far as it gains admission into God's dominions, peace and happiness fly,— harmony is broken up,— man hates and oppresses his fellow man, and all conspire against God. We feel not its miseries and its horrors because we have become hardened to them, and the heart is stupid and insensible to guilt in which it is itself involved.

Men see and understand guilt a little sometimes, when it starts upon them in some new and unexpected form, while they are entirely blind to far greater enormities which they have themselves assisted to make common. The whole city of Boston was shocked a few months since, by the disclosure of a scene of vice and cruelty, which was to the mass of the inhabitants, a new and unusal form of sin. It was cock fighting. Cruel, unrelenting wretches prepared their victims for the contest, by sawing off their natural spurs, and fastening deadlier ones of steel upon the bleeding trunks. Then, having forced the innocent animals, to a quarrel, by thrusting their beaks into each others faces, till they provoked them to anger, they sat around to enjoy the spectacle of their combat. The whole community was shocked by it, for this was sin in a new and unexpected form, and one in which they had not themselves personally partaken. But when the same experiment, precisely, is tried with *men*, the world looks on calmly and unmoved. Military leaders bring human beings together by thousands, men who have no quarrel, and would gladly live in peace. They drive them up together front to front, and having armed them with weapons, of torture and death, which nature never furnished, they succeed, half by compulsion, and half by malicious art, in getting the first blows struck,

and the first blood flowing, as a means of bringing the angry passions of the combatants into play. This they call getting the men *engaged!* There is no trouble after this. The work goes on:—a work of unutterable horror. The blood, the agony, the thirst, the groans which follow, are nothing. It is the raging fires of hatred, anger, revenge, and furious passion, which nerve every arm, and boil in every heart, and with which thousands upon thousands pour in crowds into the presence of their Maker;—these are what constitute the real horrors of a battle-field. And what do mankind say to this? Why a few christian moralists feebly remonstrate, but the great mass of men gather around the scene as near as they can get to it, by history and description, and admire the systematic arrangements of the battle, and watch the progress, and the manœuvres of the hostile armies, as they would the changes in a game of chess:—and were it not for the flying bullet, they would throng around the scene in person. But when it comes to sawing off the spurs of a game cock, and exasperating him against his fellow, — oh! that is shocking cruelty:—that they cannot bear!

We do not realize the nature, and the effects of any sin, when we have been long habituated to it, nor perceive that guilt, in which we are personally involved. But this will not alter the case. God will cherish no personal resentment against sinners, and no wish to put them to suffering. But the awful consequences of sin among his creatures must be stopped:—and in order to stop it, the wretched souls who choose it for their portion MUST BE DESTROYED.

Destroyed? It is a strong expression, but God has chosen it. We take it from his word, and we may not use a gentler one. "All the wicked will he destroy."

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know

not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;

"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power:"

Destruction! It is a word in regard to which all comment is useless, and all argument vain. Perverted ingenuity might modify, and restrain even such expressions as *eternal*, and *everlasting*, but DESTRUCTION,—it bids defiance to cavilling: it extinguishes hope. EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION! We are left to the single alternative of admitting the terrible truth, or positively refusing to take God's word.

Of this alternative, men take different sides. They who are determined to live in vice and sin, openly deny God's declaration. Reasoning with them is useless. Can you expect to find any words plainer than "*everlasting destruction?*" No: the difficulty is with the heart: Till this is touched, demonstration is useless:—but then, when the conscience is awakened, and the heart feels, the difficulty is over:—doubts about the Judgment to come, vanish like the dew.

This open contradiction of the word of God, is, however, perhaps a smaller evil than the lurking, secret unbelief which reigns in almost every heart. The number who openly deny what God declares, in regard to the desert and the punishment of sin, is very small; but the number of those who really, and from their hearts believe it, is, very probably, smaller still. Between these two extremes lie the vast majority of the human race,—asleep; too faithless to believe, and too stupid and indifferent to take the trouble to deny. They do not reason aloud about it, but there is a lurking feeling in their hearts, that they have been sinners only for a little time; they have, they think, no malicious intentions, no direct hatred of God; their guilt is that of thoughtlessness and inad-

vertence, and the mischief is slight, which immediately follows. Many a young person secretly reasons thus, after spending years in decided and determined neglect of God. The plea he puts in, is just the same as if the forger had urged in his petition for pardon, that it took him only fifteen seconds to commit the crime, that he had no malicious intentions towards the community in committing it, and that the sum which was hazarded, was only four thousand pounds. He cannot, he infers, deserve death for this. He overlooks altogether the widespread evils that would desolate the whole community, should the work he thus begins, be allowed to go on.

So the sinner, a child of ten years old, who has lived a comparatively amiable and harmless life, wonders what there can be in his life and character, deserving of the terrific retribution which God has denounced. I will tell you, what it is, my child. It is not the length of the ten years, during which you have been living in sin. That is nothing. It is not the inconvenience and suffering you have occasioned your parents. If you had been to them, during all this time, an unceasing source of pain and anxiety, it would be comparatively nothing. It is not the injury you have often done your playmates by your guilty passions; if that injury had been ten times as frequent, and ten times as great as it has been, it would be comparatively nothing. It is not that you have directly opposed and hated God; I admit that you have had no distinctly malicious intention: and if you had, it would not have materially altered the case. It is, however, that there is a great controversy going on, whether God shall reign or not among the beings he has made, when nothing but his reign can save them from universal disorder and misery, and from becoming the victims of every kind of guilt. The progress of sin, therefore, must be stopped. At whatever expense of individual suffering and ruin, IT MUST BE STOPPED It is a sad, a very sad thing,

for a child like you to linger for ever in guilt and misery, but it would be a far more melancholy thing for the rebellion against God, which has poisoned all the sources of happiness here, to spread throughout God's empire, withering and destroying wherever it comes. So that the charge against you, is not based upon the injury your individual sins have already produced, but upon this; viz. that by deliberately rejecting God, you take the side of sin and misery; you do all in your power to bring off God's creatures from their allegiance to him; you place yourself exactly across the way over which the mighty wheels of Jehovah's government are coming, and the chariot cannot be turned aside to save you, without destruction to the rest.

But we must return once more to the forgery, for the sake of deducing one farther inference, and then we take our final leave of the illustration.

8. Sin may be overruled so as to result in good. I introduce this subject with great hesitation, for it opens one of those obscure and boundless fields of thought, which are not unfrequently presenting themselves before us in looking into the mighty government of God. Clouds and mists hang over it; some objects are entirely concealed, and some we see but indistinctly, notwithstanding our most eager efforts to fix their forms. Now and then, the shades and darkness break away a little, and we get a glimpse, far on in a perspective of difficulty and doubt; but before we have time to fix the knowledge we have obtained, the clouds close in again, and all is once more darkness and gloom. The self-sufficient and shallow intellect, which never really thinks, but takes upon trust what its leaders tell it, or studies only to find proofs of what it is determined, at all events, to believe, never experiences, what I now mean; but no man can lay aside authority, and shake off the fetters of every bias, and come, with a free, untrammeled mind, to look

into the moral government of God, without being often confounded and lost in the sublime obscurities which continually gather round his way. I make these remarks because it is to such an obscure and darkened field that I point the reader now.

Sin may be overruled for good. It is highly probable that the forgery which we have been considering, resulted in the most beneficial effects to the whole community concerned in it. The sin and the penalty which followed, were most conspicuously displayed. There was scarcely a man in the whole empire who did not know these facts at the time of their occurrence, and who did not watch the progress of the efforts which were made to save the criminal. Every one knew that the administration had no malicious or resentful feelings against the sufferer; and that if they refused to pardon, it was only because the public safety, in their view, imperiously forbade it. Thus the attention of the whole community was called to the nature and consequences of this crime, and a moral impression was produced, which must have been inconceivably beneficial in its effects. It has made men look with a feeling of respect, almost amounting to awe, upon the written signature;— and attach a sacredness to it, which, though it is nothing more than a mental impression, is probably one of the greatest safeguards to property which the institutions or customs of civilized life afford. We do not mean that this instance has been the sole promoter of this feeling: but that instances like this have produced it; and this has been efficient above all others, just in proportion as it has been conspicuous beyond the rest.

The effect of the moral impression produced by this forgery and its punishment, was not confined to the particular class of offences which it brought more directly to view. It sustained the general authority of law. It spoke, in a voice, which could not be misunderstood, of

Good often done by the commission and the punishment of sin.

the nature of guilt, and the ground and the necessity of punishment; and it sent forth a warning to every village, and neighborhood in the land,— a warning which has been remembered to this day. The transaction has been appealed to continually, from that time to this, in proof of the incorruptible majesty of British law.

So true is this, that if an English statesman at the time, had regarded only the effect upon the community, he would not have regretted the transaction. If he could have overlooked the misery of the poor criminal, he would even have rejoiced at it, as a transaction destined to result in immense public benefit. In fact it has undoubtedly often happened that a government has actually rejoiced in the commission of a crime which could be made, by exemplary punishment, the means of producing a moral impression, which would save the community from some threatening dangers. Yes; where the circumstances of the offence have been favorable for this purpose, they have actually rejoiced at it. They have rejoiced too, not merely that the criminal was detected, but that the crime was committed,— as it gave them the opportunity to arrest far greater evils than the suffering of the offender. The most humane and benevolent magistrate, and even the teacher of a school or the father of a family, will often find cases, where the moral effects produced upon the community under his care, by some offence and its consequences, have been so beneficial, that he can hardly regret the occurrence. We may go even farther than this. If it had come within the power of a statesman to do it, and if he had looked only at the general good, and not at the sufferings of the individual, he could not have adopted a wiser measure, to strengthen general confidence in the authentication of a document by a written name, than by actually producing such a conspicuous case of forgery, and inflicting its punishment. Of course, to do this is entirely beyond

the limits of *human* power; and the mind shrinks back baffled and bewildered from the vain attempt to understand the degree of power which *God* can exercise in respect to the moral agency of the beings he has formed. Does any thing depend upon contingencies which he cannot control? If not, then it would seem that there is not any thing, not even transgression, which is not a part of his design. The origin of sin, and the reasons why it is permitted, if he only permits it, or ordained, if we consider him in all things absolute and supreme, is a subject in which the human faculties are confounded and lost. It opens before us one of those vistas of dread uncertainty and doubt, which we have already described. Shall we assign any limits to the sovereignty of Almighty God, in regard to the moral conduct of his creatures? Conflicting feelings tell us that we must, and that we must not; and reason stands overwhelmed and confounded by the grandeur and the profoundness of the recesses, which she attempts, in vain, to explore. We are like the traveller, lost at midnight, in the dark glens of the mountains, where frowning precipices hang over his head, and forests in silence and solitude stretch away before him. Mists float through the valleys, and heavy clouds hang over the summits of the mountains or move slowly along their sides. A momentary opening admits to his straining eyes a vista of grove and cliff and glen, which the moon, brightening for an instant, reveals to him; but before he has time to separate reality from shadow, or to gain one distinct impression, the heavy cloud rolls over him again, shuts out his light, cuts off his view, and leaves him bewildered and in darkness. It is so with many a region of religious truth. The human mind, when it has fairly entered, is bewildered and lost in the mazy scene. Sometimes an opening in the clouds in which it is enveloped, give it a momentary and partial glimpse of the objects around, and while the

thoughts are eagerly reaching forward through the vista, almost thinking that every cloud is about to break away and disappear, thick shades and darkness come over it again. Hope revives for a moment, as the moonlight beam of reason feebly shines on some new object, in some new direction; but it revives only to be again extinguished as before. Into this scene noisy controversy loves to enter, to dispute about what she cannot see, and to profane the sublimity which she cannot appreciate; but intelligent and humble piety stands awed, submissive and silent, feeling her own helpless feebleness, and adoring the incomprehensible majesty of God.

But to return, "God is love," is one part of the inspired delineation of his character. "God is a consuming fire," is equally distinct, and it comes from equally high authority. There is however a common understanding among men, that they will read and appreciate the former, while the latter is almost wholly passed by. In fact there is among many persons, and even among Christians, a feeling that God must be considered and represented as a father only, not as a magistrate; children must be taught to love him, not to fear him; and those terrible denunciations which frown on every page of the Bible are kept out of view. It is even thought by many that there is a kind of harshness and inhumanity in representing God as he is, a God of *terrible* majesty, and in holding up distinctly and clearly to view, the awful retributions he threatens, with any design to deter men *by fear*, from breaking his laws. But Jesus Christ thought not so. "FEAR HIM," says he, "WHO CAN DESTROY BOTH SOUL AND BODY IN HELL. Yea I say unto you fear him." He never shrunk from bringing fully to view the undying worm,—the ceaseless torment,—the inextinguishable fire. We are too benevolent, say some, to believe such things, or to teach such things.

Benevolent! Yes; they are more benevolent than the Savior. He had love enough for men, to tell them plainly the truth; but these, it seems, have more. I do not speak here, merely of those who openly deny the declarations of the Bible on this subject, but of a very large portion of the christian church, who never tremble themselves, or teach their children to tremble, at the wrath to come. Many a christian reader of the Bible passes over its pages, thinking that such truths are all for others, when in fact they are peculiarly needed by himself. He is a professor of religion, thinks his peace is made with God, and that consequently the terrors of a coming judgment are nothing to him. In the meantime, he leads a worldly life,— he does, day after day, what he knows to be wrong,— frustrating the grace of God, by making his vain hope of forgiveness the very opiate which lulls him into sin. As to threatened punishment, it passes by him like the idle wind. God is a father, he says; his government is paternal; and the language which proclaims his threatened judgments is eastern metaphor, or, if it has any serious meaning, it is intended for others, not for him. This feeling extends to all. It is one of the forms which human unbelief, so obstinate and so universal, assumes. If we were to look throughout the Bible for the subject which is presented with the greatest prominence and emphasis there, and one which is pressed most directly, with reference to a strong and continual influence upon human minds, it is the unshrinking and terrible decision, with which, under the government of God, sin will be punished; and yet how very few there are, even in the most enlightened christian community, and in the very bosom of the church, who stand in any daily fear of the judgment to come. So settled and universal is this feeling, that some readers will perhaps be surprised at the idea that fear of God's judgments should have a place in the bosom of the church

"There is no fear in love," they will say; "perfect love casteth out fear." So it does, but it must be *perfect* love; and when a church has attained to this,—when sin is banished from every soul,—and the world is finally abandoned,—and God reigns, in supreme, and unquestioned, and uninterrupted sway,—and every heart is a temple of perfect purity and holiness,—then may its members cease to think of the danger of God's displeasure. Then; but not till then.

The great foundation of the almost universal unbelief which prevails, in respect to the consequences of sin, rests in the heart. Man is unwilling to believe what condemns and threatens himself. But while the origin is in the heart, the intellect assists in maintaining the delusion, and this chiefly through the mistake of considering moral obligation as of the nature of debt and credit, instead of regarding God's government as it really is, a system of probation. The meaning of probation is understood well enough in reference to this world. Young men are led to see that there are certain crises in their lives, when immense and irretrievable consequences depend upon the action of an hour. This is well known;—the principle is interwoven into all the providential arrangements of life. Men do not complain of it; they see practically its fitness. But when they come to look at the attitude in which they stand towards God, the idea of probation gives way to that of debt and credit,—and they go to estimating their sins,—and to calculating the time they have spent in committing them,—and they bring on their offsets of good deeds,—and then consider what amount of suffering is necessary to close the account.

In order to show how momentous are the consequences which often depend upon a very brief period of trial, let us take a very common case. A boy of twelve years old, brought up by christian parents in some quiet vil-

lage, is sent at last to the metropolis, into a commercial establishment, where he is to commence the duties of active life. As his mother gives him her last charge, and with forced smiles, but with a bursting heart, bids him good-by, he thinks he cannot yield to any temptations, which can beset him. For many days, and perhaps weeks, he is strong. He is alone, though in a crowded city; his heart, solitary and sad, roams back to his native hills, and recalls a thousand incidents of childhood; conscience, foreseeing the struggles that are to come, is busy in his heart, retouching every faint and fading moral impression, which years gone by had made there. He looks upon the diseased and abandoned profligates around him with horror, and shrinks instinctively back from the very idea of vice. Every night he reads a passage in the beautiful Bible, which was packed by stealth in his trunk, with his father's and mother's names upon the blank page; and he prays God for strength and help, to enable him to be faithful in duty, and grateful to them.

In the course of a few weeks, the world is somewhat changed to him. He does not love his parents, and his early home the less, perhaps, but he thinks of new scenes and new employments a little more. He forms acquaintances, and hears sentiments and language which he must, in heart, condemn, though he does it more and more faintly, at each successive repetition. He engages with his new comrades in plans of enjoyment which he feels are questionable. Either they are positively wrong, or else his previous notions have been too strict; he cannot exactly decide which, and he accordingly tries them more and more, occasionally reasoning with himself in regard to their character, but coming to no absolute decision. He does not think of home so much as he did;—somehow or other there are melancholy thoughts connected with it,—and he finds it less easy

and pleasant to write to his parents. He used to have a letter, well filled, always ready for any private opportunity which accident might furnish; but now, he writes seldom, though he apologizes very freely for his seeming neglect, and expects every week to have more time.

At last, some Saturday afternoon, the proposal comes up among his companions, to go off on the morrow on a party of pleasure. It is not made directly to him, but it is in his hearing, and he knows that he is included in the plan, and must decide in favor or against it. A party of pleasure,— of innocent recreation, they call it. He knows it is a party of dissipation and vice,— and formed too for that sacred day, which God commands him to keep holy. He says nothing, and from his silent and almost indifferent look, while they loudly and eagerly discuss the plan, you would suppose that he was an unconcerned spectator. But no; look at him more attentively. Is not his cheek a little pale? Is there not a slight quiver upon his lip? And a slight tremor in his limbs, as he leans upon a chair, as if his strength failed him a little? These external indications are very slight, but they are the indications of a sinking of the spirit within, as he feels that the moral forces are taking sides, and marshalling themselves in array for the struggle which must come on. Conscience does not speak; — but he knows, he feels, how she will speak, before this question is decided. Inclinations, which are beginning to grow powerful by indulgence, do not yet draw, but he knows how they will draw; and the blood falls back upon his heart, and strength fails from his limbs, as he foresees the contest. It seems as if the combatants were drawing up their forces in gloomy silence, waiting, by common consent, till the time shall arrive, and the signal be given, for their deadly struggle.

The armistice continues, with slight interruptions, until he leaves his companions, and having closed the busi-

ness of the day, walks towards his home. But there are within him the elements of war, and as soon as he retires to his solitary room, and the stimulus and excitement of external objects are removed, the contest is begun. I need not describe it; I can have no reader who does not understand the bitterness of the struggle which ensues, when duty, and conscience, and the command of God, endeavor to maintain their stand against the onset of sore temptation. Human beings have occasion to know what this is, full well.

Besides, it is not to the circumstances of the contest in such a case, that I wish to turn the attention of the reader, but to this fact: that very probably, on the event of this single struggle, the whole character and happiness of the young man, for life, depend. He may not see it so at the time, but it is so. If duty gains the victory here, her next conquest will be achieved more easily. There is a double advantage gained, for the strength of moral principle is increased, and the pressure of subsequent attacks is diminished. The opposing forces which such a young man must encounter, in taking the right stand, are far more powerful than those which tend to drive him from it, when once it is taken. On the other hand, if he yields here, he yields probably for ever. Conscience stands rebuked and silenced; guilty passions become tumultuous for future gratification; impure and unholy thoughts pollute his mind; and though remorse may, probably, for a long time to come, at intervals more and more distant, and in tones more and more faint, utter reproaches and warnings, he will, in all probability, go rapidly down the broad road of vice and sin. All this is not fancy, but fact. It is the sober history of hundreds of young men, who go down every year to ruin, in precisely this way. They have their time of trial; the time when they are put to the test; a crisis, which, in many, many cases, is over in a few hours, but whose awful

consequences extend through a life of misery, and are not stopped, even by the grave.

Perhaps it may be supposed, that all the miseries of a life of vice, ought not to be charged upon the hour when the first step was taken, but should be considered as the consequences of the repeated acts of transgression which the individual goes on to commit. We have no objection to this at all, but it does not relieve the hour of the first transgression from any portion of its responsibility; for this very disposition to go on in sin, is the direct result of the first transgression; and it is the very worst result of it. If the first sin left the heart in a right state, the conscience tender, and guilty passions subdued; and if nothing was to follow from it but simple suffering, even if it were suffering for years, it would be comparatively nothing. The greatest, the most terrible of all the evils which result from the first indulgence of sin, is that it leads almost inevitably, to a second and a third. The tyrant takes advantage of his momentary power, to rivet his fetters, and to secure his victim in hopeless slavery. So that if a young man spends one night in sin, the great evil is not, that he must *suffer* the next day, but that *he will go on sinning* the next day. He brings heart, and conscience, and ungodly passions into such a relative condition, that he will go on. There is not half as much to stop him, as there was to prevent his setting out, so that the first transgression has for its consequences, not only its own peculiar miseries, but all the succeeding steps in the declivity of sin, together with the attendant suffering, which, to the end of time, follow in their train.

All this is true, though not universally, in respect to the vices and crimes of human life. I say not universally, for the wanderer does, sometimes, of his own accord, stop and return. But it is true universally, and without exception, of the broad way of sin against God, from which the wanderer, if he once enters it, will never,

of his own accord, turn back. Take the first step here, and all is lost. The inclination to return never comes. The whole Bible teaches us, that sin once admitted, whether it be by a spotless spirit before the throne of God, or by a tender infant here, establishes its fixed and perpetual reign. Cannot the sinner return? the reader perhaps may ask. Cannot the fallen spirit or sinning man, give up his warfare and come back to God? Cannot Dives, who neglected and disobeyed God when on earth, seek his forgiveness and his favor now? We have nothing to do with these questions; the inquiry for us to make is, not whether they *can*, but whether they *will* return. The Bible tells us they will not; but with mankind around us, and our own hearts open to our view, we scarcely need its testimony. Sin once admitted, the soul is ruined. It lies dead in trespasses and sins; going farther and farther away from God, and sinking continually in guilt and misery. It may indeed, while in this state, be clothed in the appearances of external virtue, but it will still remain, hopelessly estranged from God, so deeply corrupted, and so wholly lost, that it can be restored to purity and holiness again, only by being created anew. Sin thus does more than entail misery, — it perpetuates *itself*. The worst of all its consequences, is, its own inevitable and eternal continuance.

The question is very often asked, whether the punishment of sin in another world, will be suffering directly inflicted, or only the evils which naturally and inevitably flow from sin. The distinction between these two species of retribution is very clear in respect to human punishments, but it is lost at once, in a great measure, when we come to the government of God. It is impossible to draw the line between them, because whatever consequences follow, they are so uniformly, and indissolubly connected with sin, that they form a part of its

nature. In fact, it is not enough to say that sin brings suffering,—it *is* suffering. Misery is, as it were, an essential property of it; but whether rendered so by the decision of Jehovah, or by an original and absolute necessity in the very nature of things, it is perhaps impossible for human powers to determine. One thing is certain, however, that Jehovah does not shrink from the direct employment of suffering, whenever it is necessary to accomplish his purposes. It is an unpopular subject, and one which, probably, a vast majority of readers would prefer to have passed by; but no one can form any correct idea of his Maker's character, or know at all, what he is to expect at his hands, without being fully aware of it.

Take, for instance, the human frame. It is made for health and happiness, and when we look upon a countenance blooming with beauty, and observe its expression of quiet enjoyment, we feel that the being who formed it, is a God of love. But we must not forget, that within that very blooming cheek, there is contrived an apparatus capable of producing something very different from enjoyment. A fibrous net-work spreads over it, coming out in one trunk from the brain, extending everywhere its slender ramifications, and sending a little thread to every point upon the surface. What is this mechanism for? Its uses are many; but among its other properties, there is in it a slumbering power, which may indeed never be called into action, but which always exists, and is always ready, whenever God shall call it forth, to be the instrument of irremediable and unutterable suffering. We admit that in almost every case, it remains harmless, and inoperative; still it is there, always there, and always ready; and it is called into action whenever God thinks best. And it is not merely in the cheek, but throughout every part of the frame that the apparatus of suffering

lies concealed; and it is an apparatus which is seldom out of order. Sickness deranges and weakens the other powers, but it seldom interferes with this; it remains always at its post, in the eye, the ear, the brain, the hand, —in every organ and every limb, and always ready to do God's bidding.

Nor is it useless; an idle preparation of instruments, never to be employed. It is called into action often, and with terrific power. God accomplishes a great many of its most important purposes by it. These purposes it is not our business now to examine, though there can be scarcely a more interesting field of inquiry for us, than the uses of suffering, and the extent to which God employs it in the accomplishment of his plans. These purposes are all benevolent, most highly so; still, *suffering*, freely employed, is the means through which they are produced. All nature corroborates what the Bible asserts, that our Maker is not only a father to be loved, but a magistrate to be feared.

The dreadful suffering, which God has in providence inflicted upon communities and individuals, for the violations of his laws, cannot be described, nor can they be conceived, by those who have not experienced them. We know, however, something of their power, and the awful extent to which retribution for sin has been poured out upon men. It is far pleasanter, in examining the character of God, and his dealings with us, to dwell upon the proofs of his love, than upon those of his anger, but we must not yield to the inclination, so as to go to the Judgment, with expectations of lenity and forbearance which we shall not find. It is best to know the whole, and to be prepared for it; and not to attempt to avoid a coming storm, by denying its approach, or shutting our eyes to the evidences of its destructive power.

Still, however, the feelings which a knowledge of

God's character as a magistrate, will awaken in us, will depend in a great degree, upon the side we take in respect to obedience to his law. An efficient government is a terror to evil doers, but it has no terrors for those who do well. We all love to be under the dominion of just and righteous laws, and if we are disposed to keep them ourselves, we love to have them inflexibly administered in respect to others. If, therefore, to any of our readers the subject of this chapter is a gloomy one, we assure them, in conclusion, that they may divest it of all its gloom, by giving up sin and returning to duty. When we think of the ravages of sin in this world, the cruelty, the oppression and indescribable miseries it has brought down upon its victims, we feel that we need an efficient and a strong protector. We must be more or less exposed, a little longer, here, but the time will come, when we shall enjoy full protection, and perfect safety, and though we cannot but feel sorrowful and sad, to reflect that any of our fellow beings are to be shut up at last in an eternal prison, we still cannot but rejoice that the time will come, when neglect and disobedience towards God, and selfish and ungovernable passions towards man, will be confined and separated from all that is pure and holy, by a gulf that they cannot pass over. We know that this little planet, with all its millions, is as nothing among the countless worlds which fill the widespread regions all around it. Into those regions we cannot but hope that sin and misery has not yet extended. There may be, we hope there is, unbroken peace and happiness and virtue there. The destructive disease which has raged here for forty centuries, spreading misery, and ruin everywhere, can be controlled and stopped, only by Jehovah's hand. All depends on him; and the only hope of our ever finding a safe and quiet home, where we can once more be protected and happy, depends upon the firm and inflexible decision with which

Pardon possible. Always desirable when it is safe.

he manages this case of rebellion. He must not pardon, unless he can pardon safely. He must not endanger the peace and happiness of his empire, to save, comparatively a few, who have deliberately rejected his reign.

CHAPTER VI.

PARDON,

OR CONSEQUENCES SAVED.

"God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

NOTWITHSTANDING all that was said in the last chapter, in respect to the necessity of the most vigorous and energetic measures in arresting the consequences of sin, there is such a thing as pardon;— forgiveness, perfectly free, and yet perfectly safe. There are various ways by which the objects of punishment can be secured, without punishment itself,— though these various modes are perhaps only different applications of the same or similar principles. The object of law and penalty is to hold up to the community distinctly the nature and the effects of sin,— to make a strong moral impression against it, and thus to erect a barrier, which shall prevent its extension. A wise parent or teacher, who feels the necessity of being firm and decisive in government, will find a great many cases occur, in which punishment that is really deserved, is unnecessary; that is, when the objects enumerated above, can be attained without it. Now every wise parent and teacher desires to save suffering wherever it can be saved, and though there is great danger of doing this when it cannot be done safely, *still* there are cases where it certainly is safe.

The story of the lost cap. The teacher's motives.

The reader is requested to call to mind here, the story of the lost cap, given at the commencement of the third chapter of this work. It was there introduced for another purpose, but it illustrates very well, the point we have here in view. The course which the teacher pursued in that case, was undoubtedly far better than any plan of punishment would have been. Every body will admit this. There cannot be a question in the mind of any one who understands human nature, that the course there described, was most admirably adapted to secure the object. In order to perceive this, however, it must be distinctly understood, what the real object of punishment is, viz. a good effect upon the community, not the gratification of personal resentment against the offender. If the teacher, in that case, had been a passionate man, and if his feelings of resentment had been aroused at the misconduct of his pupil, he never would have devised such a plan to save him. It is difficult to tell which appears most conspicuous in such a case as that, the wish to promote the highest welfare of the little community over which he presided, or delicate and compassionate interest in the feelings of the offender. Any person who is capable of perceiving moral beauty at all, will see that, in the plan he adopted, both these feelings, viz. firm and steady regard for the safety of the community, and benevolent interest in the transgressor, were singularly and beautifully blended. The plan he adopted, was in substance, this: he substituted his own inconvenience and suffering for the punishment of his pupil, so as to rely upon the former for the production of that moral effect which would naturally have resulted from the latter. We observe three things in the character of this transaction, which are of importance to be mentioned here. First, the plan originated in love for the offender, and a wish to save him suffering. Secondly, it was exactly adapted to touch his feelings, and produce a real

Cases common. Not precisely analogous to the plan of salvation.

change in his heart, which punishment probably would not have effected. Thirdly, it secured the great object, the right moral impression upon the little community which witnessed it, far more perfectly and more pleasantly, than any other mode could have done. The whole plan is an instance of what may be called *moral substitution*, — putting the voluntary suffering of the innocent, in the place of the punishment of the guilty. This principle, substantially, though seldom or never brought to view by writers on rewards and punishments, is very often applied. They who resort to it, perceive, in the individual cases, by a kind of instinctive feeling, its powerful and healthful effect, though they may not perhaps philosophize on its nature. The story of the lost cap, is a specimen of many cases, where this or a similar principle is acted upon by intelligent parents or teachers. Each particular case, however, is different from the others, and presents the principle in a different aspect. I will therefore add one or two others, describing them as they actually occurred. Before proceeding, however, I ought distinctly to say, that no human transactions can be entirely analogous to the great plan of redeeming man from sin and misery by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. They may partly illustrate it, however, some conforming to it in one respect, and some in another. The reader will therefore understand that I offer these cases as analogous to the arrangement made for saving men through the atoning sufferings of Jesus Christ, only in the general principle, viz. that of *moral substitution*,— accomplishing, by means of the suffering of the innocent, what is ordinarily secured by the punishment of the guilty. I will first mention a very trivial case. I give this rather than more important and extraordinary ones, because it is more likely to recall to the minds of parents, similar instances which may have occurred in their own government.

The broken stucco. Suffering of the innocent for the guilty.

In a certain school, it was the custom for the pupils to play during the recesses, in the school-room, with soft balls, stuffed lightly with cotton, and which could consequently be thrown without danger. The use of hard balls, which were sometimes brought to school, was strictly forbidden. One morning, as the teacher entered the room, and was just taking his seat at his desk, a girl approached him, with a very sad and sorrowful look, and followed by several of her companions. She had in her hand some fragments of stucco.

"Sir," said she sorrowfully, holding up the broken pieces, "see what I have done."

"What is it?" said the teacher.

She pointed up to the ceiling, where was an ornamented centre piece, wrought in stucco, and said she had broken it off from that, with her hard ball.

It was very evident from the countenance of the offender, and from the general expression of concern which was visible in the many faces which were turned towards the group at the teacher's desk, that she herself, and all the rest of the pupils, felt deeply the fact, that the consequences of this breach of law must come upon the teacher, as the one entrusted with the apartment, and responsible for it. They were attached to their teacher, and would rather have suffered themselves, than have brought inconvenience and trouble to him; and he perceived by a glance of the eye, that by this means, a moral impression was made, far more effectual and valuable than any punishment would have produced. In a word, he saw that, through his suffering, the offender might safely go free. If no injury had been done, he would have noticed, very seriously, any violation of the law, but since the injury came upon him, and since the little community was in such a state that it would feel this deeply, the very best, the very wisest thing he could do, was to pass over the offence entirely. A

rough, passionate and unthinking man, might perhaps, in such a case, have rebuked, with greater sternness, and punished with greater severity, just in proportion to the inconvenience and trouble the sin brought upon him; but he who knows human nature, and studies the adaptation of moral means, for the accomplishment of moral ends, will see in a moment, that in such a case, the mildest punishment, even the gentlest reproof would weaken the impression; and that the way to make the most of such an occurrence, would be to dismiss the sorrowful pupil with kind words in respect to the injury, and without a syllable about her sin. This, too, is *moral substitution;* receiving, through the sufferings of the innocent, the advantages usually sought from the punishment of the guilty.

It is difficult to lay down general principles in regard to the applications of this principle in the moral education of the young, because so much depends upon the state of feeling of the parties concerned, at the time. For example, in the case last described, had the offender been not penitent and not concerned, and had a feeling of cold indifference prevailed in the school-room, in regard to the injury which had been done, the course taken would have been most evidently unwise, and unsafe. It is a question of moral impression on hearts,— an impression in favor of law, and against the breach of it, — and it is only where this impression can be produced better without the punishment than with it, that there can be any safe remission. It is however unquestionably true, and all parents and teachers ought to keep it in mind, that where any serious consequences result from an offence, those consequences in a wise and dexterous government, will lighten, not increase the severity of reproof and punishment. They go far towards producing the very impression which reproof and punishment are intended for, and consequently, they diminish the

necessity of it. Those parents and teachers, who take little notice of offences when they are harmless, and punish them with severity when followed by accidental injury, ought to perceive that they are not administering moral government, but only gratifying their own feelings of resentment and revenge.

In the case we have just described, the injurious consequences were not voluntarily assumed by the innocent individual in order to allow the guilty one to be forgiven. They came upon him without any consent of his. The following case is different in this respect. The persons who suffered the injury here, voluntarily assumed it. The case, like the former, is described exactly as it occurred.

At one of the New England colleges, not many years ago, a company of joiners were employed in erecting a building. A temporary shed had been put up in the college yard, where the work went on, and where, at night, the tools were left, protected only by the honesty of the neighborhood. From some cause or other, a feud arose between some of the workmen and the students, and the next day, when the latter came to their work, they found their tools in a sad condition. Planes were gapped and notched, saws dulled, chisel-handles split, and augers had been bored into the ground. The indignation which this wanton injury excited, threatened very serious consequences. Some measure of retaliation was expected from the mechanics, which of course would be repaid again by the students, and thus it was feared that a deadly and permanent hostility would be produced. It was of course impossible to ascertain the authors of the mischief, and if they had been ascertained, punishment would probably have only made them more secret in their future plans. A species of moral substitution removed the difficulty entirely. The plan was this.

After evening prayers, when the students were all

assembled, one of the officers stated to them the case, — described the injury, — presented an estimate of its amount, and proposed to them that they should raise by voluntary contribution, a sum sufficient to remunerate the injured workmen. "There is no claim upon you for this," said he; "not the slightest. The mischief was indeed undoubtedly done by some of you, but it was certainly by a very small number, and the rest are not in any degree responsible. Still, by leaving their tools so completely exposed, the workmen expressed their entire confidence in you. This confidence must now be shaken; but if you take the course I propose, and voluntarily bear the injury yourselves, you will say, openly and publicly, that you disavow all participation in the offence and all approval of it; and you will probably prevent its repetition. Still, however, there is no obligation whatever resting upon you, to do any thing of the kind. I make only a suggestion which you will consider and decide upon, as you please."

The students were then left to themselves, and after a few minutes' debate, occasioned by a slight opposition from a few individuals, the vote was carried almost unanimously, to assume the injury themselves. The money was contributed and paid. The innocent suffered, and the guilty went free, and the moral effect of the transaction was most happy. The whole quarrel was stopped at once. The tools were repaired, and left afterwards in perfect safety, though as unprotected as before.

It ought to be stated however, that the sum necessary, was a very trifling one, and its amount had nothing to do with the moral effect of the transaction. Any officer would have paid double the sum, in a moment, to have ended the difficulty. The effect was not produced by the reparation, but by the guilty individuals seeing that their innocent companions would assume the consequen-

ces of their guilt, whatever they might be. It was not a measure of ways and means, but of moral impression.

This case seems different from the preceding, in two important particulars. The first is, that the loss was borne, neither by the offenders, nor by the magistracy, but by a third party, not directly concerned in the transaction. The second is, there was no evidence that the offenders were penitent. In fact the plan had no reference to the offenders at all. Its whole aim was moral impression upon the community. They escaped in this instance, not through any plan formed for saving them, but through the imperfection of the government, which had no means of detecting them. They were not *forgiven;* they simply *escaped.* Generally, in such cases, the plan has two objects; to save the offender, if he is penitent, and to produce the right moral effect upon the community. Here, however, the former was no part of the design; it was the latter exclusively. Had they been discovered, and found to be still unchanged in heart, justice would not have been satisfied, to use Dr. Johnson's language, without their punishment. Still, the other great design, — a strong moral impression upon the community, to arrest the progress of sin, and to create an universal feeling against it, was most admirably secured through the voluntary consent of the innocent, to suffer the consequences which ought justly to be borne by the guilty.

All these are cases in which a person is relieved from sufferings which he deserves, on account of others, but it is equally in accordance with universally admitted principles of human nature, that a person should *receive favors* which he does not deserve, on account of others. We are represented as not only forgiven through Jesus Christ, but as receiving every blessing and favor for his sake. This seems to be a moral substitution of a little different character, but it is exemplified with even greater

frequency in human life, than the other. There calls at your door, late at night, a wandering stranger, and asks admittance. He seems destitute and wretched, and as it is not convenient, and perhaps not even safe, to admit him into your family, you very properly direct him to a public house at a little distance, and supply him with the means of procuring a reception there. Just as he is leaving you, you think you recognise something familiar in his features, and on inquiring his name, you find he is the son of one of your dearest and earliest friends. How quick do you change your plan, and bid him welcome, and endeavor to repay by your hospitality to him, the favors you received in days long past, from his father. But why? It is no return to the father. He is long since in his grave. Why; do I ask? There is an universal, and almost instinctive feeling in the human heart, leading us, under certain circumstances, to make such moral substitutions,— to show favor to one, on account of obligation to another. The apostle Paul understood this principle, when he sent back Onesimus to his master, and endeavored to secure for him a kind reception by saying, "If thou count me a partner, receive him as myself."

The reader will perceive that it has not been our object, in the preceding illustrations, to find a parallel among human transactions for the great plan adopted in the government of God, to render safe the forgiveness of human sins. Such a parallel, precisely, cannot be found. All that we have been attempting to show is, that the principles upon which the plan is based, have a deep seated foundation in the very constitution of the human mind, and that they are constantly showing themselves, more or less perfectly, whenever a real moral government is intelligently administered here. We must look however for such exemplifications of these princi-

ples, in the government of the young, for in no other case in this world, is a government properly a moral one. The administration of law in a political community, is a different thing altogether. It is simply the enforcement of a system of rules of action, designed almost exclusively for the prevention of injury. In a moral government, strictly so called, one mind superior to the others, presides over a community of minds, and acts upon them in his administration with reference to their moral welfare. He looks beyond mere external action,— adapts his measures to moral wants and moral feelings,—and aims at an influence over hearts. A political government, though often confounded with this, is distinct in its nature, and aims at different objects. It attempts only the protection of the community against injury. Its province is to regulate external actions, not to purify and elevate the feelings of the heart; and it does this by endeavoring to enforce certain prescribed rules, relating almost exclusively to overt acts, and designed merely to prevent injury. This difference in the nature and design of a political government, and of a moral government, strictly so called, is fundamental, and it applies with peculiar force to the subjects we are considering. In fact there is, properly speaking, no such thing as forgiveness, in human jurisprudence. Legal provision is indeed made for what is called pardon; but this is, in theory, a mode of arresting punishment, where evidence, not brought forward at the trial, comes to light afterwards, or where peculiar circumstances which the strict principles of law could not recognise, render it equitable to remit the sentence. In practice, it goes indeed sometimes farther than this. In some cases the executive, overcome by compassion for the criminal, liberates him, at the risk of sacrificing the public good. In others, by a common though tacit understanding, pardons are granted so uniformly in certain cases, as to

amount to a permanent modification of the law. But all this is entirely different from real forgiveness. It is, in fact, only discretionary power, lodged in suitable hands, to modify the inflexible decisions of law, when equity, in peculiar circumstances, demands their modification,—it is not real *forgiveness*. Real forgiveness in political government has no place. We must look therefore, among the young, where alone we find that anything like moral training is the object of government, for illustrations of the principles of God's administration. We shall find them however here. A wise parent or teacher, who acts intelligently, and watches the operation of moral causes and effects upon the hearts under his care, will often, though perhaps insensibly, adopt these principles, and will imitate, almost without knowing it, the plans of the great Father of all. We certainly shall find abundant examples of the operation of those principles which we have been endeavoring to bring to view: viz. that the object of punishment is not to gratify resentment against an individual, but desire to promote the welfare of the community; that it cannot safely be remitted, unless there is something to take its place, and to do its work, in producing moral impression; and that this generally cannot be done without the suffering of some one who is innocent.

We have dwelt upon this subject perhaps long enough already, but it is so essential to the peace and happiness of the young Christian, clearly to understand it, that we will present it in one other point of view. Let us suppose a father, when sitting with his children around his evening fire, accidentally learns that one of them has played truant during the day. He has been guilty of the same offence once or twice before, and the measures which were adopted then, have proved to be ineffectual Now there are plainly two distinct feelings which may lead the father to inflict punishment: I mean here by

Two motives for punishment. Their operation in this case.

punishment, any means whatever of giving him pain, either by severe reproof, or deprivation of enjoyment, or direct suffering. There are two distinct feelings which may prompt him to inflict punishment. First he may be a passionate man, and feel personal resentment against the boy, and punish him under the influence of those feelings;— a case exceedingly common. Secondly, without feeling any resentment, but rather looking with tender compassion upon his son, he may see the necessity of doing something effectual to stop this incipient sin, and to prevent its extending to his other children. If now the former is the father's feeling,— an emotion of resentment and passion, on account of the trouble which the fault has caused, and is likely to cause him, there is no hope for the poor offender;— resentment can only be gratified by the suffering of the object of it. If, on the other hand, the feeling is only a calm, though perhaps anxious regard for the moral safety and happiness of his family, there is some hope; for punishment in this case, would only be resorted to on account of its promoting this safety and happiness, by the moral impression it would make, and there may perhaps be some other way of accomplishing this object. But let us look at this more particularly.

The reason why truancy is so serious an evil, is not the loss of a day or two at school, now and then,— or any other immediate and direct consequence of it. It is because it is the beginning of a long course of sin; it leads to bad company, and to deception, and to vicious habits; it stops the progress of preparation for the duties of life, and hardens the heart, and opens the door for every temptation and sin, which, if not closed, must bring the poor victim to ruin. These are what constitute its dangers. Now the difficulty with the boy is, that he does not see these things. He is spiritually blind, and argument and persuasion will not open his

eyes. Punishment is therefore necessary to make such an impression upon his mind and that of the others, as to arrest the progress of the sin. It may be confinement. It may be some disgrace or deprivation; or suffering in any other form. If it is however judiciously administered, and in a proper spirit, it must have an effect, and it may remove the evil altogether.

But there may be some other way of accomplishing the object,— that is, of producing the needed impression. Let us suppose such a way. Let us imagine that after learning that his son had been guilty of the offence, the father gives no indications of resentment, or any other personal feeling, but begins to think what he can do to arrest the evil, without bringing suffering upon his boy. At last he says, "My boys: I want you all to understand what the real nature of truancy is. I shall, however, say no more about it now, but to-morrow I shall wish you to go and take a walk with me."

The boys look forward with eager interest to the time, and when it arrives, the father takes them to a neighboring poorhouse, where lies a man sick, and suffering excruciating pains under the power of diseases brought on by vice. We may suppose the father to have been accidentally acquainted with the case. The boys enter the large and dreary apartment, crowded with beds, tenanted by misery in every form; for there is an apartment in every extensive poorhouse, where you may see the very extreme of human wo,— the last earthly stage of the broad road, — where life lingers in forms of most excessive misery, as if to show how much the mysterious principle can endure. On one narrow couch, foaming mania glares at you,— on another lies sightless, senseless, torpid old age, a picture of indescribable decrepitude and deformity;— from a third, you hear the groans and see the restless tossing of acute suffering,— and gibbering idiocy laughs upon a fourth, with a noise which

grates more harshly upon the feelings than the deepest groans.

Into such a scene the father enters, followed by his sons, pale and trembling, for it is a scene which they have scarcely nerve to endure. The attendant, knowing whom they wish to see, precedes them, guiding them to a bed in the corner, where lies the only patient in the room who has mind enough left to be conscious who, and what, and where he is. He has covered his head, in the vain effort to hide from the horrors of his last earthly home. The attendant raises the corner of the blanket which covers him, and the visiters see there a haggard face, with its two glazed and motionless eyes rolled up towards them and staring wildly from their sunken sockets.

The visiter has brought the wretched patient some little comfort or luxury, which may amuse and gratify him a moment, though it cannot relieve. He then falls into conversation with him, and the boys who stand by, learn something of the progress and the termination of a life of vice and crime. The father carries him back to early childhood, and learns from the sufferer's own lips, that truancy and the bad company which it led him into, were the first steps of his wretched course.

Now there is nothing unnatural in all this. Precisely such an experiment may never have been made, but plans for producing moral impressions exactly analogous to it, have been successfully adopted a thousand times, and every reader will see that if such a plan were adopted, and if the hearts of the boys were in such a state as deeply to feel it, it would, in this case, have rendered all farther proceedings unnecessary. If the guilty one's heart was really touched by the scene, so that he should go home penitent and humbled, and resolved to sin no more, it would be perfectly safe to forgive him. And the point to be kept most distinctly in view in the case, — the point which it is, in fact, the whole design of the

case to illustrate, is, that free forgiveness, which would be dangerous alone, may be rendered safe by measures ingeniously and judiciously adopted, which shall produce the same moral impression upon the community which punishment would have made; and that the moral Governor who is actuated by a calm regard for the general good, and not by personal resentment, will devise such measures if he can. It is the great glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that it thus provides a way for the safe forgiveness of sin. We are taken to the cross, and we see the nature and effects of sin there; and the great sacrifice which was made on Calvary, goes instead of the just punishment of men, to make that great moral impression which is necessary to sustain law, and satisfy justice, and arrest the consequences of sin.

The imaginary case we have been describing, is evidently very different in many respects, from the plan of salvation by the sacrifice of the Son of God. It would have resembled it more closely if, instead of one offender, we had supposed two, one of whom should be affected and led to penitence by the scene he witnessed, while the other remained hard-hearted and stubborn. The father would then have felt compelled, while he forgave the one, to take some farther measures with the other. The resemblance would have been closer still, if instead of showing the boys some existing misery, an innocent brother could, in some mysterious way, himself have voluntarily assumed for a time, the sufferings which were the inevitable consequences of the sin. These changes, however, and many others designed to make it correspond more closely with the original, do not alter its nature, or touch the great principle which it brings to view: viz. that to render it safe to forgive sin, some plan must be divised, for producing, by other means, the moral effects for which punishment is intended.

We have, in former chapters, taken a view of two

great objects for which the Son of God appeared here, to set us an example, and to teach us, by precept, our duty. We have considered the nature of the example, and also the system of duty which he held up to men. We now come, however, to look at another great design, far greater, probably, than either of those, to make, by perfect obedience during his life, and the sufferings he endured at the close of it, such an exhibition of the nature, and the effects of sin, and such an expiation for human transgressions, as should render it safe to forgive all who are penitent. He came, in other words, not only to teach us duty, and to set an example of its performance, but to suffer for us, and to make, by that suffering, a moral impression on the great community of intelligent beings, which should go instead of our punishment, and render it safe that we should be forgiven.

It has made such an impression. It is now eighteen centuries since that death occurred, and among all the varieties of opinion which have been adopted in regard to it, by Atheist, Deist, and Christian, in one point all must agree, that the death of Jesus Christ has made a stronger impression upon the human race, than any other transaction since the creation of the world. In the remote and subjugated province where it occurred, it was witnessed, indeed, only by a few thousands, and they looked upon it with little more interest than would have been excited by the execution of any other object of popular fury; they perhaps supposed too, that in a few months, it would be forgotten. But no. In a very few weeks, it was the means of arresting the attention, and subduing the hearts, and altering the characters and lives of thousands. The tidings of the transaction, and the explanation of it, spread like a flame. The walls of the city could not confine it; the boundaries of the province could not confine it. The influence of wealth, and the coercion of military power, were equally insufficient to

stop its progress, or to prevent its effects. It shook the Roman empire to its foundations,— and now, eighteen centuries from the time of its occurrence, it holds ascendency over more hearts than it ever did before, and it is an ascendency which is widening, deepening and strengthening, and promises to spread to every nation, and to every family on the globe.

This impression, too, is of the right kind. A knowledge of the death of Christ, with the explanation of it given in the Scriptures, touches men's hearts,— it shows the nature and the tendencies of sin,— it produces fear of God's displeasure,— and resolution to return to duty, and thus produces effects by which justice is satisfied, and the authority of law sustained, far better in fact, than it would be by the severest punishment of the guilty sinner.

There has always been in human hearts, a feeling of the necessity of some provision to render safe the forgiveness of sin. Penitence has never been enough to quiet conscience. Hence self-inflicted sufferings and sacrifices for sin, which have prevailed in every age. The latter was the institution established by divine authority to typify the great sacrifice which was to come at last. But though established by divine command, it could not have spread so far, and have been so constantly and universally observed by men, if there had not been some strong and deeply seated feelings in the human heart with which it chimed.

Though, as the Apostle informs us, the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin, that is, it was not sufficient to render punishment unnecessary, still the institution, as regulated by God's commands to Moses, was admirably adapted to the moral condition and wants of men. One of the most brief and lucid descriptions of it is contained in the following passage.

Sacrifices. Reparation required. Sincere repentance.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbor in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbor; or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doeth, sinning therein:

Then it shall be, because he hath sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered to him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he hath sworn falsely: he shall even restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth, in the day of his trespass offering.

And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord, a ram without blemish out of the flock, with thy estimation, for a trespass offering unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord; and it shall be forgiven him, for any thing of all that he hath done in trespassing therein." Leviticus 1: 1—7.

The first thing that attracts our notice in this provision is, that reparation, — full reparation for all the injury, must be made, as the first step towards a reconciliation with God. Another interesting thought is, that the animal required to be brought for the sacrifice was one which in ordinary cases would probably be an object of value to the offender; for in pastoral life, men almost love their flocks and herds, and the owner of the innocent victim, one would suppose, could not see its blood flowing for his sins, without being moved. Still, however, it was not chiefly on this account, i. e. the direct moral effect of the transaction upon him, that the sinner was required to bring his offering, but it was to remind him

habitually, that something was necessary to open the way for his forgiveness, besides mere repentance and reparation, and thus to bring him to the right state of heart to be saved by means of the real propitiation which was at length to be made. The manner in which David speaks of this subject, shows that it was generally understood that this duty was not intended to be an empty form. "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalm, 51: 16, 17.

We have now accomplished the plan which we had marked out for this chapter, which was the exhibition of some of the principles upon which the pardon of sin can safely be bestowed. These principles are in substance as follows. The design of God in connecting such severe and lasting sufferings with sin, is not resentment against the sinner, but a calm and benevolent interest in the general good. He wishes no one to suffer, and has accordingly provided a way by which he can accomplish more perfectly what would have been accomplished by the inflexible execution of the law. By this means, the way is open for our forgiveness, if we are penitent for our sins. The circumstances of this sacrifice will be considered more fully in a subsequent chapter; the design of this has been only to explain some of the acknowledged principles on which the necessity of it is grounded. This object is now accomplished; but before closing the chapter, we wish to devote a few pages to turning this subject to a practical account.

There are a great many persons to whose wounded spirits, the truths advanced here would be balm, if they would apply them. Many a thoughtful reader of such a work as this, is often in a state of mental anxiety and

suffering, which the subject of this chapter is exactly calculated to relieve. You feel that you are a great sinner, and though this feeling produces no powerful and overwhelming conviction, it still destroys your peace, and fills you with uneasiness, which, though it may be sometimes interrupted, returns again with increased power, at every hour of reflection, and especially in solitude. You wish you were a Christian, you say. I will suppose that you really do. Many persons who say that, really mean only that they wish for the benefits of piety, not for piety itself. They would like the rewards of the Savior, but they do not like his service. I will suppose, however, that you really wish to be his. It is possible that you do, and yet you may not have found peace; you think there is some love for the Savior in your heart, some interest in his cause, some desire to serve him, and yet do not feel relieved from the burden of sins, and are not cheered with the spiritual peace and joy which beam in the hearts of others. Now the cause of your restless unhappiness, is a burdened conscience; — *a burdened conscience.* There is a sort of instinctive feeling, or if not instinctive, it is interwoven with all the inmost sentiments of the soul, that guilt deserves punishment. You feel that you are guilty. You know that God is an efficient governor,— a God of terrible majesty,—for whatever men may say, there is something in the heart, which testifies that it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God, and that the soul which gives itself up to sin, must expect to feel the weight of divine displeasure. You know this, and you feel it, and though you ask forgiveness, you do not realize that it can safely be bestowed. Now the remedy is simple, and effectual. It is for you TO COME IN FAITH TO THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST.

Let me explain precisely what I mean by this. Your conscience is uneasy, being burdened by the load of

your past sins. Perhaps you do not distinctly fear punishment, but it is the sense of responsibility for sin, and an undefined dread of something that is yet to come, which really destroys your rest. Now why have you any thing to fear? Why should God ever call you to account for those sins? It must be either from personal resentment against you, or else because the welfare of his government, requires the execution of his law upon you. There cannot be any thing like the former, you know. It must be the latter, if either. Now the balm for your wounded spirit is this, that the moral impression in respect to the nature and tendencies of sin, which is the only possible reason God can have, for leaving you to suffer its penalties, is accomplished far better by the life and death of his Son; and if you are ready to abandon sin for the future, there is no reason whatever remaining, why you should be punished for the past. God never could have wished to punish you for the sake of doing *evil*, and all the *good* which he could have accomplished by it, is already effected in another and a better way. Now believe this cordially. Give it full control in your heart. Come to God and ask for forgiveness on this ground. Trust to it fully. If you do, you will feel that the account for the past is closed and settled for ever. You are free from all responsibility in regard to it. Ransomed by your Redeemer, the chains of doubt and fear and sin fall off, and you stand, free, and safe, and happy, a new creature, in Jesus Christ,— redeemed by his precious blood, and henceforth safe under his mighty protection.

This change, bringing to a close the old responsibilities for sin, and commencing as it were, a new life in the Savior, that is, by an intimate union of spirit with him, is very clearly described in many passages of scripture like the following; which, however, you have perhaps often read without understanding it. "I am crucified

with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." To receive these benefits, you must have faith. Faith means confidence; not merely cold, intellectual conviction, but confidence,— a feeling of the heart. To show this distinction clearly, imagine a man unaccustomed to such an elevation, to be taken to the summit of some lofty spire, and asked to step out from an opening there, upon a narrow board, suspended by ropes over the dizzy height. How will he shrink back instinctively, from it. Explain to him the strength of the ropes, show him their size, and convince him by the most irresistible evidence that they have abundant strength to support many times his weight. Can you make him willing to trust himself to them? No. But the builder, whose confidence in the suspended scaffolding has been established by experience, stands upon it without fear, and looks down to the stony pavement a hundred feet below, with an unmoved and steady eye. Now you must have such faith in Christ's sufferings and death, as not merely to admit their efficacy, but to trust yourself to it.

A father was once amusing a number of children with an electric machine, and after one or two had touched the knob and received the shock, they drew back from the apparatus, and looked upon it with evident dread. The father presently held out to them the jar, uncharged, and consequently harmless, and said distinctly, but without emphasis, "If you touch it now, you will feel nothing. Who will try?"

The children drew back with their hands behind them.

"You do not believe me," said he.

"Yes sir," said they, with one voice; and several hands were held out to prove their faith; but they were quickly withdrawn, before reaching the dangerous knob. One alone, a timid little girl, had *that kind* of confidence

in her father which led her really to trust to him. The rest believed his word, but had not heartfelt faith in it. Even the little believer's faith was not unwavering. You could see on her face, when the little knuckle approached the harmless brass ball, a slight expression of anxiety, showing that she had some doubts and fears after all; and there was an evident feeling of relief, when she touched the knob, and found, from actual trial, that her father's word was true, and that there was really nothing there.

This last is christian faith exactly. It not only believes what the Savior says, but it acts in reliance upon it. It *trusts* to Christ, and throws itself upon him, and tries to hush its remaining fears, and to feel fully the confidence which it knows is deserved. Still there will be too often a slight misgiving — a hesitating fear, alternating and mingling with its confidence and love,— and expressing itself in the prayer, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." There ought not to be, however, the slightest misgiving. It is sinful and unreasonable even in the least possible degree.

Come at once then to the cross of Christ with *faith* in it. Real heartfelt confidence in its efficacy in taking away all the necessity for punishment, if you are only ready now to abandon sin. If you do this, you may be sure that peace and happiness will come.

This will give you peace, but nothing else will. So deeply in the human heart has God laid the feeling, that sin must bring suffering in its train, that you cannot get rid of the burden of responsibility for the past, but in this way. You may forget it for a time, you may drown it by the excitements of business, or of pleasure, but the poison will remain, rankling more and more, and the more clearly you see your sins, and the more deep your repentance, the more distinctly will you feel that repentance alone, can never authorize their remission. We

cannot be justified by any deeds of the law; that is, we cannot be pardoned, — considered just, — by any thing we can do in obedience to the law. We must be justified by faith,—if we are to enjoy real peace with God, it must be through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who gave himself for us, that we might be reconciled to God through the propitiation he has made for our sins.

When a person first commences his course as a moral agent, he then, indeed, has before him obedience or disobedience, and if he obeys, he is then *justified by the law*. The phrase is almost a technical one, but the meaning is obvious. He keeps the law, and on account of this obedience he stands innocent and safe. He is safe from all charges of guilt, from all the consequences of guilt. He enjoys peace of mind, and a quiet conscience, which result from his own moral excellence, his strict obedience to the law. He is justified by works, and can have no place for repentance, and no need of a Savior.

If, however, he has once committed sin, his character and standing are for ever changed. He is, and must be, henceforward on a different footing. Common sense tells us this; — for suppose, among the spotless angels around God's throne, there was one who, millions of years ago, on one single occasion, fell into a passion, or yielded his heart to the dominion of any other sin. Suppose that he was brought immediately to repentance, and returned to duty, and never afterwards transgressed, and that God forgave him his sin, how evident it is, that the moral attitude in which he stands must thenceforth be different from that of all the others. How differently would he be looked upon! How differently must he for ever feel! The recollection would follow him, and something like a sense of responsibility would follow him,— a burden which no lapse of time, and no subsequent obedience could remove.

It would be so, too, under any other government.

Even where the sin is entirely forgiven, it places the sinner on permanently different ground. Among a family of affectionate children, suppose that one should, on a single occasion, rebel against his father, and introduce for one day, derangement and suffering into the usually happy circle. The father takes such measures as to bring him back immediately to repentance and submission, and he is forgiven; freely and fully forgiven,— and yet how plain it is that the next morning, when the family are about to separate from the breakfast table, to engage in the various duties of the day, that this returning and forgiven sinner, stands in a moral attitude entirely different from the rest. He feels differently; his brothers feel towards him differently; his father looks upon him with new and altered thoughts. The evil consequences of his sin are perhaps all over,— for his father may have remedied them all. The guilt of it is all gone,— for if he is really penitent, he is renewed and strengthened in his feeling of affectionate submission to his father. But something remains. It is not resentment against him;— his father and his brothers love him even more than before. It is not suspicion;— they feel increased confidence in him, knowing that the bitter lesson that he has learned, will save him from wandering again. It is not alienation of any kind,— their hearts are bound more closely to him than ever, and you will see that there is a tone of greater kindness, and a look of greater affection, from father and mother, to this their returning son, than if he had not sinned and been forgiven. What is it, then, that remains? It is hard to describe it, but the heart testifies that there is something which places him in a new position, and gives to the affection of which he is an object, a peculiar character. He is *justified;* that is, there no longer rests upon him the responsibilities of guilt,— but he is not justified by his obedience,— by the deeds of the law. He has

violated law, and wandered from duty, and yet he is justified and loved again.

Sin therefore, even if it is sincerely repented of and entirely forgiven, places the soul which has committed it, in a new and peculiar attitude. If peace returns, it is not the peace of conscious rectitude; it is the peace of forgiveness,— of reconciliation; — as perfect as the other, but of a different kind. This distinction is clear. Every one who looks into his own heart will see it. The two kinds of justification and of peace are brought to view continually in the New Testament, where almost every form of contrast and antithesis is employed to set one over against the other, in order to give point and prominence to the distinction. It is of immense importance, that the young Christian should consider this, so that he may clearly understand which kind of peace and happiness he is to seek.

Forgiveness; the proud, unsubdued, and restless spirit of the world knows not what it means; but he who has experienced the enjoyment which springs from it, feels that it is the richest and deepest fountain of human happiness. The heart renewed, — sin throwing down its weapons and escaping from the temple which it has made wretched so long, — God reconciled,— the soul overflowing with the emotions of gratitude and love, to which the contrast of past indifference and enmity gives a character of warmth and vividness, which they can never know who have never sinned,— the past, gloomy and dark as it is, all forgiven,— the future, bright and alluring with promised enjoyments, which are prized the more as the free unmerited gifts of infinite love,— these are some of the feelings which mingle in the heart which is reconciled to God. Others lie too deep for description; they must be experienced to be known; but they who know them will testify, that in the sense of penitence and pardon, where it has full possession of the soul, there

are fountains of as pure and deep enjoyment as the heart can contain. The soul rests in it, bathes itself in it, as it were, with contented and peaceful delight. Other enjoyments are restless and unsatisfying. This fills the soul, and leaves it nothing to wish for but to be undisturbed. It is hardly proper for us to inquire why sin was permitted to enter the government of God; but this we can see, that it has opened a fountain of enjoyment entirely unknown before. It has brought happiness which, without it, could not have been felt, upon the earth, and it has even introduced a new song into heaven.

But this is a digression from our path. We were endeavoring to show that sin necessarily places the soul which has fallen a prey to it, in a new position. Even where it is forgiven, the moral attitude in which the sinner stands is permanently changed. This is, however, not the consideration with which we are here chiefly concerned. We wish rather to show the change it produces in the relation which the soul sustains to its Maker, before it is forgiven. Let us return then to our supposition, and imagine that the father, in the case of his disobedient son, had not taken such measures as to render it safe for the boy to be forgiven. There will then remain upon the guilty mind, a burden, which cannot be taken off, though other objects and interests may come in and, in time, hide it from his view. It is thus perhaps gradually forgotten, but it is not removed. It remains like a fragment of a weapon in a wound, perhaps seldom noticed or felt; but it is there, and when memory brings it back to view, it sends a pang of remorse to the inmost soul. Many persons carry such sins upon their consciences all through life. Some transgression was committed in early youth, which has been a thousand times forgotten, and a thousand times called back by memory to view, and every time it comes, the

heart sinks, and the spirit writhes, under the rankling of the wound.

Such is sin. It is a barbed and poisoned arrow, which if once allowed to enter, will penetrate deeper and deeper, and will remain, unless removed by a moral treatment adapted to the moral constitution of man; and the wound cannot be healed till the sin is taken away. You may cover it up; you may forget it, you may, like a man with a wounded side, take care to keep the tender part from the slightest touch which may disturb its quiet, — but the wound is still there, and it cannot be healed, till the sting which was left in it, is taken away.

Now this, my reader, is your case. Sin has reigned in your heart, and consequently the peace and satisfaction of perfect obedience are gone for ever; and such is the moral constitution of the soul, that there is no peace left for you, but that of forgiveness and reconciliation. This cannot come through mere repentance,— or confession,— or reform. It cannot come by these means, in any case of sin or crime whatever. A thief who should be pardoned by government, and become truly penitent, and firmly re-established in the principles of integrity, would not, and could not through these alone, be restored to happiness, even as a citizen. The memory of the past would be bitterness and gall, and though he might gradually forget his wound, he could never by such remedies be made whole; if he had nothing else to save him, he would carry the galling and heavy burden to his grave. And you, if you are to find real peace, real deliverance from the burdens of sin, must find it in clear views of a Savior crucified for you, and in coming to him with faith— i. e. cordial, unhesitating confidence, that he is able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through him. You must feel that, by his life and sufferings and death, he has accomplished all which would have been effected by the punishment

due to your sins, and that henceforth you may go free, safe and happy in him, the past remitted for ever,— and the path of holiness and peace now opened broadly before you, and inviting you on.

We must make a clear distinction, however, between peace and pardon. Cases are constantly occurring, where a person who, from peculiar circumstances, has obscure or clouded views of the nature of forgiveness, and the necessity of a Savior, is still really penitent for sin. If penitent, he will be forgiven, in fact he is forgiven, though it may be, as it very often is, weeks and months, and even years, before he sees so clearly the nature of redemption through the Son of God, as to have peace and happiness restored to his heart. The great point is, to induce sinners to return to God, and to give their hearts to him. If they do it right, they will be humble, and watchful, and prayerful, and God will guide them to *all* truth; but there are many instances where peace to the troubled spirit is long delayed. The little child may begin to love its Maker, before it knows any thing about the way of safe forgiveness: so may a half-instructed pagan: so did in fact the Savior's disciples; they thought their master was to have redeemed his country by political power, until they actually saw him crucified; and even in christian countries, a soul may be often so shut away from the light and influences of the gospel in their purity and power, as to feel after a Savior a long time, in vain. Moral renewal is the essential thing for *pardon*. A knowledge of the salvation by Jesus Christ, and clear ideas of the great sacrifice for sin, give *peace*. St. Paul, the ablest, the most powerful and thorough-going preacher of the cross, that ever lived, understood this, when, standing before the august assembly at Athens, he preached simple repentance, and a judgment to come. Nay, we have higher authority still, for Jehovah himself sent priests and prophets, for

four thousand years, simply to call upon his people to repent of sin and do their duty; they made but a very few obscure allusions to a Savior,— so obscure that they were not understood till that Savior came.

John Bunyan has beautifully exhibited this view, by making Christian carry his burden long after he has entered the narrow way. His face was turned towards Zion, and though he fell into many sins, and encountered many difficulties, his heart was changed. He felt the burden of sin, and sought relief from a friend whom he found on the way. But the friend replies, "Be content to bear it, till thou comest to the place of deliverance, for there it will fall from thy back of itself."

This burden, now, was not the burden of existing sin, but of responsibility for past sin. If it had been the former, the guide would have given him very sad advice. No, it was not the present pollution of sin, but its past responsibilities which became so heavy a burden, and though his heart was renewed, and he was in the right way, it was some time before he came so near to the cross of Christ, as to understand and feel its power in relieving his conscience of its load. He went on afterwards with light and happy steps.

The great question then, with every religious inquirer is, whether you have found *penitence*, not whether you have found *peace*. Do you relinquish sin? Are you weary of it, and do you loathe and abhor it, on its own account, as an evil and bitter thing, from which you can sincerely pray to be freed. There is a burden resting upon you, which still destroys your rest, and while your heart has really returned to God, and you can find no happiness but in him, you wonder that you continue wounded and miserable, instead of finding the relief at once, which you hoped penitence would bring. You conclude, therefore, that you are not penitent, though you are almost conscious that you are so; and you sink, over-

whelmed with the difficulties of understanding the movements and the condition of your own heart. You feel a burden, and think it must be the burden of guilt.

If your heart is really in the condition I have described, it is the burden of responsibility for past sins, which hangs over you and bows you down, though your heart is really renewed, and consequently you are freed, in some degree, from its present power. The remedy is the cross of Christ. Come to it, and see what he has done and suffered for you. Look at the moral effect of this great sacrifice, and feel that it takes off all the necessity of punishment, and all the burden of your guilt Come and trust to this. Seek union with Christ, so as to be one with him, and open your heart to the full admission of his assurance, that you may, through this union, have all past responsibilties ended for ever, and that all the blessings which his unfailing obedience and spotless perfection have deserved, may flow in upon you. But oh, remember, if you do thus come and give yourself to your Savior, going free from the bitter fruits of sin, through his sufferings, and expecting to enter your home in heaven, under his protection, and in his name,—remember that giving yourself up to him, must not be an empty form. Christ gave himself for us, not to have us go on in sin, after receiving its forgiveness, but to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself, a peculiar people. If you hope for pardon in this way, you must give up the world and sin entirely, and for ever. Henceforth, its allurements and temptations must be nothing to you. You must say, in language, which, like a great many other passages, on every page of the New Testament, is dark to those who have not experienced its meaning. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST SUPPER.

"I have desired to eat this passover with you, before I suffer."

THE plan which has been followed in the progress of this work, may not have been very obvious to the reader. It was our design to present the great elementary truths of the religion of the gospel, as they naturally connect themselves with the circumstances of our Savior's history. We accordingly commenced with his childhood, and were led at once, into a train of reflection on the nature and the character of that eternal and invisible essence, whose attributes were personified in him. His conduct and character as a man, came next before us; then the views of religious duty which he came to urge upon men. The rejection of his message by mankind, the consequences of it, and the way by which these consequences may, in any case, be prevented, naturally followed, leading us a little away from the immediate history of our Savior. We now return to it,—ready, however, to be led away again, whenever necessary to accomplish the great design of this volume.

We have already shown that the great object which the Savior had in view, in the influence he endeavored to exert over men, was to induce them to repent of sin, and to return to duty; and not to make them theoretically acquainted with theological truth. He pressed moral obligation, and endeavored to arouse and to enlighten conscience. He did indeed assure them of forgiveness, if they would abandon sin, but he left them in a great measure, to be taught, by future revelation, which was to be made by his Spirit to the apostles, in what way that

promised forgiveness was to be obtained. It was not until after his resurrection that he discoursed freely and plainly, even with his disciples, on this subject. Then, indeed, he explained the subject to them fully. He showed them that "he ought," that is, that it was necessary for him "to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory; and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself."

This full disclosure of the nature and objects of his mission was not made until after his death. He approached, however, to such a disclosure, in his last sad interview with his disciples, on the night in which he was betrayed. It is to the circumstances and character of this interview, that we have to call the attention of our readers in this chapter.

Jerusalem was crowded with strangers, so much so that, though the enmity against the Savior had been gathering strength, until it was now ready to burst all barriers, the leaders did not dare to proceed openly against him, for fear of a riot among these multitudes, which they should not be able to control. They feared the people, it is said, — for the people loved to listen to him, and therefore would probably defend him. They greatly misunderstood the human heart. He deserved to be beloved, and they thought that he would be; but the very populace whom they so much feared, instead of feeling any disposition to protect their innocent victim, joined the cry against him. Far from giving them any embarrassment or restraint, their clamor was the very means of urging the Roman Governor to do what his own sense of justice most plainly condemned.

At any rate, the enemies of the Savior thought it wise to proceed with caution, and they were, at this time, laying plots for his life We shall consider the nature

of the plan they formed in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to say, that Jesus knew the whole, and felt that his last hour had nearly come. He had been accustomed for some time, to speak in public during the day, and at night to go out to rest in the neighboring villages, or to seek retirement and prayer upon the Mount of Olives. His last night had now come. His last public address to men had been delivered. The sun had set, for the last time, to him, and nothing now remained but to give his beloved disciples his farewell charge, and then once more to take his midnight walk, and offer his midnight prayer.

It was evening; the evening of a great festive celebration, which for fourteen hundred years had been uninterruptedly observed. Established to commemorate one deliverance, and to typify another very singularly analogous to it, it was intended to continue till the Lamb of God should at length be slain. A new and nobler ordinance was then to take its place;— an ordinance of deeper meaning, and higher value, and of interest, not to one small province only, but destined to extend its influence to every nation on the globe. This night therefore, strictly speaking, was to be celebrated *the last passover*. The thousands who crowded the city did not know it; but Jesus did, and, as he made preparations for celebrating it, with his friends, noiselessly and quietly, in their upper chamber, he must have been impressed with the moral greatness of the occasion A friendless man, persecuted and defenceless, and doomed to be executed, the next day, as a malefactor,—coming, with his twelve friends, as powerless and unprotected as himself, into their secluded room, there to bring to a close the long series of splendid celebrations which, for fourteen centuries, had been sustained by God's command. Yes: the meeting on that night, was the connecting link between the old dispensation and the new. The Savior

must have known it. Friendless and persecuted, as he was,—the whole city thronged with his enemies,—the plot for his destruction matured, and spies out for him,—the very price for his life actually paid, and danger pressing around him so closely that he was obliged to make his arrangements very privately, in order to be sure of an uninterrupted hour,—he yet must have known that he was bringing the long series of Jewish rites and ceremonies to its termination, and introducing a new dispensation, whose ordinances, of nobler meaning, beginning there, were to spread to every nation, and to last through all time. It is strange that the place chosen for this, too, should be the very heart and centre of hostility to his cause.

At the appointed hour, they came together, and as they assembled around the table, their Master felt that he met them for the last time. They felt it too. He told them plainly that his hour had come, and they felt depressed and dejected, looking forward as they did, with anxiety and terror, to the scenes which were to ensue. *They* knew what they were very imperfectly, but Jesus himself saw the whole. They were in the dark, or at least they saw but dimly, but it was all broad light to him. As he looked around he could call to mind what each one would do. There was Judas, with the price of his blood already paid,—there was Peter, who was to abandon and deny him,—and not one of all these his firmest friends, but would forsake him in the hour of danger, and fly. But he did not think of these things. It was the last time he was to be with them, before his death, and while he was fully aware that their fortitude could not stand the dreadful trial to which it was soon to be exposed, he did not dwell upon such thoughts. He looked upon them with interest and sympathy, not with anger,—and tried to comfort, not to reprove them. He once became agitated in speaking of his betrayal, but

composure soon returned, and he did not allude to his abandonment by the rest, except in reply to their own boastings of unshrinking fidelity.

But we must come to the discourse. The peculiar circumstances under which this meeting was held, distinguish it from every other occasion on which the Savior gave religious instruction. In fact we may almost say it was the first and only occasion on which he gave what may be strictly called religious *instruction*. He had pressed *duty*, in a thousand forms, before;—here he exhibited *truth*. He had, on every occasion, in the house and by the way,—in the thronged city, and before the multitudes assembled in the fields and on the sea-shore, urged men to repent and forsake their sins,—now he was to exhibit some great *truths* more clearly than he had ever done before, to this select company, whose hearts had long been preparing to receive them. In the path along which he led the human mind, repentance came first, and theology afterwards; and it would be well if cavilling inquirers, at the present day, would follow his example. They should begin by obeying the sermon on the Mount, and then come and listen to the conversation at the last supper.

There is something most highly interesting and instructive in the manner in which the Savior adapted his communications to the occasions on which they were to be made, and to the purposes which he endeavored to effect by them. A modern preacher would have carried the metaphysics of theology all over the villages of Galilee, and would have puzzled the woman of Samaria, or the inquiring ruler, with questions about the natute of the Godhead, or the distinction between moral and natural inability. But Jesus Christ pressed simple *duty*. His explanations all went to throw light on the one single distinction, between right and wrong. Even when Nicodemus came to him, the man better qualified, per-

haps, than any other one who visited him, for theological discussion, he simply urged upon him the *necessity* of the great change of heart; he attempted no explanation of the precise mode by which the heavenly influence could effect it. He pressed the fact, but declined all investigation of the theory. He in fact pronounced the subject beyond the grasp of our present powers, yet human pride and self conceit have clambered over the barrier which he thus attempted to raise; and confused, and contradictory, and unintelligible speculations, agreeing in nothing but hostility to one another,—killing the spirit of piety and destroying the peace of the church, have been continually appearing, from that day to this, — a standing and perpetual commentary on the Savior's words, and a most powerful, though most melancholy proof of the wisdom which dictated them.

But to return to the subject of our Savior's instructions. These instructions, when addressed to the public at large, related to duty,— direct, practical, immediate duty,— and he seemed to love to bring it to view in ways so clear, and in cases so plain, that no proof but the testimony of conscience within every man's bosom, should be necessary to establish his positions. "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine," was his motto, and he acted according to it. The time, however, for instruction had now come,— instruction in the higher truths of religion,— the nature of the Deity, the relation sustained to him by Jesus Christ, the design and fruits of true religion, remission of past sins through the Redeemer's blood, and the presence and influences of the Holy Spirit as the means of leading men to repentance. These were topics on which the Savior had seldom spoken didactically before, but now the last opportunity had come, and he opened before those who were to be the future ministers of his religion, new treasures of religious knowledge. He had been the preacher before,

Free conversation. Truths adduced. His testimony respecting himself.

—he became the religious teacher now,— and under the guidance of the beloved disciple, who has recorded the conversation, let us go in to the still, solemn assembly, and hear what he has to say.

It was a familiar conference, rather than a formal discourse. The disciples freely asked questions, and sometimes the conversation ceased to be general, and the individuals of the company talked with one another, in separate groups as they happened to be seated together. The great truths of religion were, however, the subjects of discussion, and nothing could afford higher proof of the genuineness and truth of the description of this interview, than the cautious, hesitating manner in which the leading disciples are represented as asking their questions; it was in precisely the way, in which new and extraordinary developements of truth are always received by pupils, from a teacher to whom they look up with veneration and respect. But let us look at these truths in detail.

1. He explained to them that he was the great manifestation of the Divinity to men; and that consequently it was only through him, that the human mind could find its access to the Divinity. But let us quote his words.

I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the

Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

The human mind still repeats Philip's very natural request. "Show us the Father." It reaches forward for some vision of the DIVINITY,—the great unseen and inconceivable essence, which pervades all space, and exists through all time; and it often decks out for itself, as we have shown in a preceding chapter, a gorgeous image, with crown and sceptre and throne, which reason tells them cannot exist, and which if it did exist, would be a splendid idol, not God. How many Christians bow to such an image, which their imagination has made;—an idol more vain, in fact, than those of stocks and stones,—for they at least, have substance, while this is but a phantom of the mind. No. Jesus Christ is the personification of the Divinity, for us; the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and it is by him alone that we are to find our way to the great power which reigns over us all. Believe this, said the Savior, on my assurance, or else believe it on account of the powers you see that I possess, and the works I do.

2. He taught them that divine influence upon the hearts of men was essential to their repentance and salvation. "Ye have not chosen me," said he,—"I have chosen you." What a declaration! How solitary it makes the Savior in the world he had come to redeem. More than thirty years he had spent here, doing good continually, and proclaiming offers of reconciliation and pardon, and now, on the last night of his life, surrounded by inveterate foes, already actually *sold* to them, and with but a few hours of liberty remaining,—he gathers pri-

*John, 14: 6—11.

vately his twelve friends, that he may have one last sad interview with them; and here he had to reflect that even these his *twelve* friends, among ten thousand enemies, *had not chosen him;*— he had chosen them. He stood alone, after all; the only example of independent, original holiness. The universal reign of ungodliness and sin, had been broken only where *he had chosen* individuals to be saved, and trained them, by his own power, to moral fruitfulness and beauty.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." How much it means! How many lessons we may, by a most direct and rigid inference, draw from it! How lofty the moral courage which led him to say it! Another man, in such a case, would have strengthened the attachment of the few who remained true to him, at such an hour, by praising their generous fidelity in adhering to their chosen friend. But Jesus, as if loving the solitary grandeur of the position in which he stood, with all the world against him except these twelve, gently withdraws himself even from these,——"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you,—— One of you will betray me, —— another will repeatedly deny that he is my friend, and in the course of this night, when the hour of real danger shall come, every one of you will be scattered, and will leave me alone." Solitary sufferer! how wide a distance separated thy lofty powers, and original and stable virtue, from the weak and frail and *cultivated* attachment of thy trembling friends!

The Savior brought to view, in many other forms, the dependence of his disciples, for all the moral excellence they could ever possess, upon their union with him.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth, that it may bear more fruit."

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

"Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me."

It was as if he had said, You have no spiritual life originating in yourselves, and existing independently. You depend on me. It is by divine power exercised upon you, by means of your union with me, that your hearts are to be purified more and more, so that the fruits of piety may be increased in you. Without this union you will be nothing.

He spoke to them of the Comforter also, alluding again and again to this promised influence from above; saying first that he would send him from the Father, and again that the Father would send him in his, the Savior's, name. This Comforter, the Holy Spirit, was to enlighten their minds, and comfort their hearts, and, above all, was to bring effectually to the hearts and consciences of men, those great truths which the Savior had preached to the ear in vain. The three great subjects which this Spirit was to press upon the attention of mankind were pointed out. Human guilt, human duty, and a judgment to come. "He shall reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness;" of *righteousness and of sin*, some theologians would say, reversing the order,— thinking that in a logical arrangement, right should come before wrong. But no; the Savior's view is far more true to nature and to fact. The Holy Spirit when it comes to men, finds them debased and depraved, and righteousness, if it finds a place in human hearts at all, must be preceded, by conviction of *sin*. To produce this conviction, and then to awaken penitence and love, and to keep alive a sense of obligation and accountability, is the work which this heavenly visiter comes to do.

The necessity of an interposition from Heaven to turn

men away from their sins, and to bring them to repentance, had been often alluded to by our Savior before. But the truth stands out, with uncommon clearness and prominence, in these his last instructions. His pupils did not at once fully understand it. Nay, who, we may ask, understands it now?

"He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

"How," asked one of the disciples, "how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto *us*, and not unto the *world*?"

"If a man love me," was the reply, "he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and *we will come unto him* and make our abode with him."

It is no wonder that, with their imperfect ideas of the true character of their master, and of the relation he sustained to the Divinity, they asked the question, how he could manifest himself to them and not to the world;—and how strange must his reply have sounded, if they supposed it came from a man like themselves. God and I will come and dwell with the good! What language,—if a mere mortal man had uttered it.

It is most interesting to observe how, in this whole conversation, the thoughts of the Savior seemed constantly to dwell on this great truth,—the moral dependence of the human heart on God. It came up in various forms, again and again, as if it was a truth which his mind dwelt upon, and continually recurred to with pleasure. Even in his prayer, it is most strongly expressed, and almost in the first words he uttered. "As thou *hast given him power over all flesh*—" what sort of power? we ask:—the answer follows;—"that he should *give eternal life*, to as many as thou hast given him." And what is meant here by eternal life? holiness itself, or the reward of holiness? "And this is eternal life," the Savior proceeds, "that *they might know thee, the only*

true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ his Son, is a gift from the Deity to men; and it is Jesus Christ himself who bestows it.

The heart which is still unsubdued, is restless and dissatisfied, under the claim which God thus asserts to all the praise which human holiness deserves. But the soul which is really penitent and humble, finds its greatest happiness in feeling and acknowledging it. Religion is submission to God; and the feeling of submission and the sense of dependence, are called for more imperiously in reference to our moral and spiritual wants than to any other. There is in fact no moral or spiritual safety without these feelings, and our Savior knew this full well. There is scarcely any subject which he brought more continually to view. On this occasion he expressed the sentiment again and again, in various forms, or rather expressions seemed spontaneously to flow from his lips, recognising the truth as if it was one which he dwelt upon with pleasure.

The feeling which prompted this, is one which every true Christian can understand. The highest emotion of enjoyment which the renewed heart can feel, is perhaps this sense of entire, unqualified, unconditional submission to God. The word submission does not however precisely express the feeling. It is the sense of being entirely, and altogether in God's hands, and at God's disposal,— in every respect,— for life, health, prosperity, character, heart, everything. It is when this feeling has most complete and unbroken ascendency in the mind, that the soul attains its highest position, and enjoys its purest happiness. Theoretical reasoning on the subject might lead us to suppose that such a feeling would diminish the sense of responsibility, and throw the soul off its guard, and leave it exposed to temptation, by its trusting thus its moral keeping to another. But no;

it is not so in fact. The heart which lies most submissive in its Maker's hands, and trusts most entirely to his protection, is the one which is most alive to the guilt and dangers of sin, and most sensitive and shrinking in respect to the slightest contamination. The higher are its ideas of its own moral helplessness, the firmer is the ground on which it stands. When it is weak, then it is strong. Christian philosophy has been sadly perplexed to explain the *theory* of moral agency, and the nature of the divine control over human hearts, but Christian experience settles all questions about the *fact;* and the penitent and humbled soul, which will leave the whole field of worldly influences and the speculations of human science, and go on, alone, after God, will, in the depths of its own experience, be led to views of the *extent* of this control, which can never be forced by argument upon those who have not acquired them by their own spiritual vision. The temple of religious experience has all its magnificence and all its grandeur within; and they who have found their way into the inner apartments, and have actually gazed upon the solemn splendor that is there, can understand and sympathize with one another; while they who stand without can never be convinced, by argument or description, of what they cannot see. Jesus Christ did not attempt to do this; He adapted his discourse to the degree of progress which they who heard it had made. He did not stand arguing without, but led his followers in, and pointed out the sublimer truths, and the loftier sentiments of religion, only as fast as they could see and feel them.

We have seen that the feeling which seemed so to fill the Savior's heart on this occasion, the entire spiritual dependence of the human soul on God, is a safe feeling; it is also a most happy one. A sense of dependence, and confidence in promised protection, are delightful emotions to hearts constituted as ours are. This is true

in regard to physical dangers. When the dark heavy clouds gather in the western sky, at the close of a sultry summer's day, and flashes of lightning are seen, and heavy rolling thunder seems to convulse the sky, the christian father betakes himself to his sheltered home, and gathers his family around him, and loves to come and lay the whole precious trust into his Maker's hands. If his heart is right it will be a happy hour to him. He has done all he can do, and there is already over him whatever protection human art can raise against the rain and hail, and the tempestuous wind and fatal lightning, and all the dangers of the midnight storm; but his happiness consists in forgetting all such protection, and coming to place himself and all that is dear to him, under the mighty hand of God, confiding in him and in him alone. He knows he can trust to nothing else. There is a roof over him, but one blast of the tempest might scatter it to fragments. His walls a single bolt from heaven might rend asunder, and his whole dwelling in a moment burst into flame. He knows all this; and it is his happiness to feel that though he has done all he can do, he must trust in God, and in God alone.

It is exactly so with his spiritual protection. He will do all he can do, but he never will consider his prayers and resolutions and watchfulness as his real defence against temptation and sin. No; he takes delight in feeling that, in respect to *moral* protection, his trust is wholly in God, and this feeling that he is spiritually in his Maker's hands, is not only his greatest safety,— it is his highest happiness. The soul, too, comes to this feeling in all the trying scenes, and solemn occasions of life, with peculiar pleasure. It flies to it as to a refuge, and enjoys its refreshing influence, when nothing else would sustain or console. Our Savior seems scarcely ever to have thought of it so much, and to have pressed it so strongly and so repeatedly upon his disciples, as in this last sad scene.

But let us proceed to consider some of the other topics he brought before them on this occasion. As we go on, the reader will be struck at the selection he made. The great fundamental truths of religion seemed to rise before him and occupy his view. It was in fact a discourse on the theology of the gospel, bringing out its great features, and holding them up prominently to view. It has not the formal arrangement of a scholastic discourse, for it was a free conversation,—but the truths are all there, and the nature of the views he thus presented to the disciples, so lofty, and so profound, contributes, quite as much, perhaps, as the affecting circumstances of the occasion, to give to the whole scene that air of majestic and affecting solemnity, which is not equalled by any other passage, even in the Bible. But let us proceed to consider the remaining topics.

3. He taught them that the true evidences of piety are its *fruits;* a truth of which it seems harder to convince mankind than of almost any other. Nobody denies it in words, but very few really believe it in fact. We are always substituting something else in the place of these fruits. It seems as if the Savior felt that now, as he was about to leave his disciples to carry on his work alone, they would be peculiarly exposed to danger from this source, and he accordingly pressed upon them again and again attention to it. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "If a man love me he will keep my words." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Such expressions were continually occurring in his discourse; and if we consider, what was unquestionably the fact, that the record of John contains only a brief summary of the remarks which the Savior made, we shall be con-

vinced that he urged this subject very emphatically and fully, upon the attention of his disciples.

The church is, however, very slow to learn the lesson. We err in two ways, sometimes by placing something else entirely, in the stead of fruits, as evidences of piety, and sometimes on the other hand, by mistaking the nature of the fruits which are to be regarded as evidence. We do this continually; and probably when the day of real trial shall come, the whole church will be overwhelmed with astonishment to find at last what an immense amount of hollow and hypocritical pretension, merely, will be found under her banner. In fact the evidence which is, perhaps, mainly relied upon here, in determining the attitude in which a man stands, in respect to christian character, is almost altogether different from that pointed out by the Savior. Bold assurance of profession, and religious party spirit, rank very high among the commonly received evidences of piety. If a man talks confidently of his change, and expresses deep interest in the duties of his new service, and if the language of the Christian comes fluently from the tongue, we are slow to suspect insincerity. In many such cases, the very profusion of professions, might lead us to withhold our confidence. Empty profession is generally loquacious, while sincere and devoted attachment, is strong and deep in the heart, but its words are few. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," the reader will say. True, it speaks out of the abundance, and yet it says but little. There is abundance of feeling but not of words.

Party spirit in religion is another spurious proof of piety. The victim of it seems to be entirely devoted to the cause of Christ; he has indeed a strong interest in that cause, and makes continual effort and submits to great sacrifices to promote it. But the real fruits of piety do not reign in his heart, and if he was not spirit-

ually blind, he would see that his zeal is party spirit, almost entirely; — i. e. an interest in an organization of which he has become a constituent part. Whenever men act together, the mind, by one of its mysterious powers, sees a new being in the union, and soon forms almost a personal attachment for it. It enlists men's pride and ambition, and arouses all their energies; and devotion to this imaginary existence becomes often one of the strongest passions of the human mind. It is one of the sins to which the human heart is most prone, and in which it is most impregnable. A man usually thinks it a virtue. He sees he is not working for himself, and persuades himself that it is the *principles* of his party which are the object of his attachment. But this is not the case, for when these principles spread partially into other parties he is always displeased. He is never satisfied at seeing his opponents coming to the *truth*,— they must come over *to his side*.

This is party spirit, and the humble and devoted Christian, who really loves his master, finds it constantly insinuating itself into his heart, and acting as the motive of a very large proportion of his labors in the service of his master. The tests by which this spirit can be detected, we have not time now to describe; but it burns everywhere in the Christian church, it influences parish against parish, and society against society, and makes each denomination jealous and suspicious of the rest. It frowns upon the truth and the Christian prosperity which is not found within its own pale. It is the spirit of intolerance and exclusion. "We found one," it says, "casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him because he *followeth not us*." Banish this spirit for ever. If men will *cast out devils*, no matter whom they follow; they must do it, if they do it at all, in Jesus's name, and no matter for the rest. We must not frown upon real piety or truth, because they do not appear in our own

uniform; but then, on the other hand, we must never confound truth with error, nor admit the pretensions of any specious counterfeit, which may assume the name and form of piety, while it is without its power.

But what are the real fruits of piety? the reader may ask. The apostle has given the catalogue. They are characteristics of the heart, not of the external conduct. They are these:

Love. The heart that is renewed, experiences an entire change in respect to its great ruling principles of action. Instead of being swayed by the impulses of selfishness and passion, its affections go forth and rest upon God as their supreme object, and link themselves also, by indissoluble bonds, with every other being who is joined in heart to him. These new emotions have henceforth the control.

Joy. The prevalence of universal love will go very far towards producing universal enjoyment. Love is happiness, and it brings happiness in every form; and true piety will find sources of pleasure which sin never knows. Where there is moroseness or melancholy, there must be something wrong. It may be moral or physical disease, but it must be one or the other.

Peace. Peace within itself, and peace in respect to others. Selfishness is keenly alive to its own rights, and keenly sensitive to injuries; and where each seeks mainly his own, there must be collision. Piety quiets animosities and strifes, by destroying the value of the objects of contention. It points men to new sources of happiness; and they are such as can be enjoyed most perfectly, when others share them. The heart that is renewed, is at peace, too, within itself. Its irritating passions and corroding cares are all allayed, and the soul is like a summer's sea, serene and placid,—the storms of passion hushed, and the golden beams of the sun of righteousness reposing tranquilly upon it.

Long-Suffering. The true Christian feels that he is himself forgiven, and he consequently bears long and is kind. He looks upon sin with compassion for the offender, and remembers the burning from which he was saved. The heartless pretender can, in public, assume this language, but when off his guard at home, or in his counting room, or field, his hasty words, and impatient looks betray the spirit which reigns in his heart.

Gentleness. The Christian feels that his great business in life is to lead *hearts* to the Savior: and hearts, if led at all, must be led gently. The hollow-hearted pretender will try to drive. Harsh, repulsive and tyrannical, he shows that he has not experienced the grace of God, which always softens asperities, and smooths the roughness with which selfishness is so often clothed.

Goodness. The renewed heart feels a benevolent interest in the welfare of every sentient being. It desires universal happiness, and springs, with an ever ready elasticity, to produce it, wherever Providence shall present the opportunity. The great public effort, the generous donation, the open deed of charity, may be the result of pride, or ostentation, or party spirit, but real Christian benignity shows itself in all the thousand nameless occasions, where a word or a look or a trifling action may give pleasure. It shows itself in great efforts too; but the highest proof of its existence and its power, is continued, and universal, and spontaneous action.

Faith. True piety believes what God says and trusts to it. It sees heavenly realities, and feels their influence continually. It trusts in God's care, realizing that every mercy is his gift, and bowing submissively to affliction and trial. Hypocrisy is sound in its theoretical views, but it repines at losses,—or stands restless and uneasy over the cradle of a sick child,—or proves by the manner in which it pursues this world, that it has no faith in God's promises about the happiness of another.

Meekness. The sincere Christian is humble in respect to himself, and indulgent and mild towards others. Having some conceptions of the deceitful wickedness of his own heart, he looks upon the worst of men as brother sinners. The hypocrite cannot see his own pollution and guilt, and is consequently haughty, censorious, and uncharitable in respect to the failings of his fellow men.

Temperance. The worldly enjoyments of the sincere disciple are in all respects, regulated by Christian principles. The regulator, existing in the heart, acts always, and with steady consistency. Hypocrisy restrains those indulgences which men would see and condemn, but she rewards herself for her venal virtue, by the freedom of her secret sins.

Such are the fruits of piety, as enumerated by an inspired apostle. It was such fruits as these that our Savior had in view. He charged his disciples, again and again, to look for these, as the only evidences that human professions of love to him were really sincere.

We have thus considered the three great truths which stand out most prominently in the instructions of this occasion. There were, however, various other topics discussed, and various incidents occurred, which it does not comport with our present purpose to describe. There are many considerations which it would be highly interesting to present, such as the perfect frankness with which he foretold the dangers and sufferings which his disciples were about to incur in his cause; the frequency and earnestness with which he pressed upon them the promised efficacy of prayer, sometimes saying that *he*, and sometimes that the Father would grant their requests; and the manner in which he presented to them the comforts and consolations of religion, as their refuge from their future trials. These things, however, we cannot dwell upon now.

At the close of the interview the Savior established the great Christian ordinance, which has been celebrated, without interruption, in every age, from that day to this. The circumstances under which the ordinance was established, teach us a lesson, as we have already briefly said, in a preceding chapter, in regard to the manner in which our Savior regarded forms and ceremonies, which his followers have in all ages been very prone to forget. It is not that they overrate the importance of external religious observances, but that they forget what it is upon which their value and importance entirely depend,— viz. their spiritual meaning, and the feelings of heart with which they are performed.

It was one great object of the Savior's preaching to call the attention of men from outward actions to inward character, and the manner in which he instituted this last solemn ceremony is precisely in keeping with the whole tenor of his public instructions. There is no formal ceremonious preparation for it; no studied arrangements and cautious prescription of mode and form; but when the time arrives for his last farewell, he merely sets apart, in the most simple manner, his last solemn act of intercourse with his disciples, as a perpetual memorial of his death;—and he does it too in such a way as most effectually to fix their minds upon its moral meaning,—its spiritual effect. He did not devise any new ceremony for the purpose, but only paused upon a portion of the solemn transaction in which he was last engaged, and consecrated that. He did it too in language so brief and general as to show that moral impression, not ceremonial exactness, was what he had in view in looking forward to future celebrations of the ordinance, by his followers in ages to come. "Take these," says he, as he offers them the bread which had been placed upon the table for another purpose, and poured out another cup of their simple wine, "Take these, as em-

blems of my sufferings and death, incurred for the remission of your sins, and henceforth do this in remembrance of me. As often as you do it, you do show forth the Lord's death until he come."

The Savior acted evidently upon the same principles in regard to the other great ceremony of the Christian religion. He wanted some mode by which an open profession of attachment to him might be made; and he just adopts one already in use for a similar purpose. He did not *contrive* baptism, as a mode of publicly professing piety,—he merely *adopted* it, formed already, as it was, to his hands. The people were accustomed to it. Their associations were already formed in connexion with it, and of course it was the most convenient mode. He would probably have taken any other form had any other been more convenient and common. The one chosen is indeed highly appropriate; denoting so clearly the inward purification which the open professon of faith in Christ and attachment to his cause should always bring with it; but it is the sincerity with which it is performed, not the appropriateness of its character, which gives it all its value.

Such is the origin then of the ceremonies of the Christian faith. For a mode of admission to his church, he simply takes the ordinary sign of religious profession among the people with whom he lived, and in the selection of a ceremony to commemorate his sufferings and death, and to be, in all ages and in every land, a perpetual memorial of the most momentous transaction which ever occurred, he simply pauses a moment upon the last act which he performed in the presence of his friends, most solemnly significant, it is true, and consecrates that to the great purpose he had in view. It reminds us of a transaction which occurred twenty-five centuries before, when Jehovah, after the flood, wishing to quiet the fears which future clouds and storms might awaken, just takes the

rainbow, the object most obvious on the occasion when it is wanted, as the token of his promised protection. In nothing more strikingly than in this, are false religions distinguishable from true. The former are yielding and flexible as to principles, but minute in the specification of forms, and unbending in the exaction of obedience. The latter makes moral principle the rock, unmoved and immovable though heaven and earth should pass away; but when it comes to signs and ceremonies,— almost any thing will do. The ordinances of the gospel are indeed appropriate and symbolical, but they are no more so, than a thousand others would have been, which, under a little different circumstances, it would have been quite as convenient to adopt. The ceremony of admission to the church would have had as much meaning if it had consisted simply in holding up the hands to heaven, or appearing in a white robe, the emblem of purity, or making the sign of the cross upon the forehead.

And yet there is something in the simple act which Jesus Christ consecrated as a memorial of him, which renders it admirably adapted to its purpose. Other persons have generally endeavored to perpetuate their memory by leaving some magnificent monument behind them. One of the most striking exhibitions that human beings make of the mysterious principles of their nature, is, by their desperate struggles to keep a place for their names upon the earth, after they have themselves gone beneath the ground. One founds a city; another, at a vast expense, erects a mausoleum, and a third stamps his effigy upon a medal or a coin. But Jesus Christ understood human nature better. He used no marble, or brass, or iron,— he laid no deep foundations, and reared no lofty columns. When he bade the world farewell, he simply asked his friends occasionally *to do one little act*, in remembrance of him.

He was wiser than the builders of the pyramids. A

hundred thousand men, if ancient story be true, were employed by one monarch, for twenty years, in rearing the pile which was to perpetuate his memory. The Savior did the work, and did it better, by a few parting words.

Yes; Jesus Christ left us as a memorial, not a magnificent thing to be looked at, but a very simple thing to be done; and the influence, in keeping the remembrance of the Savior before the minds of men, which the simple ceremony has exerted, for eighteen centuries, and which it still exerts, shows the wisdom of the plan. Its very simplicity, too, is the means of rendering it, to a considerable extent, a test of the sincerity of professed attachment to the Savior; for the ceremony cannot long continue in its simplicity, unless such attachment sustains it. When love is gone, it becomes unmeaning, and, from its very nature, there is nothing but its meaning to give it interest among men. When the heart ceases to be in it, then, there is but one alternative,— it must lose its whole value, and ultimately be abandoned, or else pomp and parade must come in, to supply the interest which grateful recollection ought to give. It has accordingly, in some cases, been converted into pomp and parade, and in others gradually lost its interest and disappeared. But with these dangers on every side, the institution has still lived and flourished, and is spreading to every nation on the globe.

We have already, once or twice, alluded to the manner in which our Savior selected and established the ceremonies of our religion, as evidence of the manner in which he regarded them, viz. as *means*, valuable only on account of their conduciveness to an end;— and that end too, a moral, not a ceremonial one. This consideration is important to us now, because it affects the degree of strictness, with which we observe these institutions in their precise form. If the ceremonies had

been valuable on their own account, if there had been any intrinsic efficacy in them, and if, in consequence of this, their details had been minutely prescribed, they should have been observed with the most precise and scrupulous accuracy. If, on the other hand, they are solely valuable on account of *their moral expression*, so to speak, then such precise and scrupulous accuracy is not necessary. There ought, certainly, to be no deviations without sufficient cause, in either case; but a cause which would abundantly justify deviation in the latter, would not justify it in the former. If for instance a father, on leaving home, gives direction that a sick child should take a certain medicine at seven o'clock in the evening, to be followed two hours afterwards with bathing, in water prepared in a prescribed way, it would be the duty of those left in charge to be precise in compliance. The efficacy is in the *things to be done*, not in their moral effect, and consequently the things must be done exactly. On the other hand, suppose that he requested his family to assemble at a certain window, where they had often sat with him, every Saturday evening, at seven o'clock, to sing a hymn which he had written and taught them. Here the object is of a different kind, altogether. The directions are just as precise, but the common sense of every family would make a distinction between the degree of exact precision necessary in compliance. If, on some evening, company was present, and protracted their stay beyond the time assigned, they would assemble to sing their hymn of remembrance half an hour later. But company would not have led them to postpone administering the medicine, beyond the appointed time. So if the room assigned for the meeting was, on some evening, cold, and uncomfortable, they would not hesitate to assemble around the fire in another apartment instead of that; or if the mother was sick and confined to her chamber, on one

of the Saturday evenings during the father's absence, they would gather round her bed, to sing their hymn. They would, however, by no means, be led to deviate so easily from the precise directions in the other case. They would not, perhaps, point out to one another the philosophical grounds of the distinction, but there would be an immediate and spontaneous perception of it, and its influence upon their practice would be decided.

The ceremonies of false religions are of the former kind; that is, rather of the former than the latter. Their value does not consist in their moral expression, but in their supposed intrinsic efficacy. The Hindoo bathes in the Ganges, and the Mussulman mutters his prayers, with a view to the efficacy of the ceremony itself. This efficacy is all imaginary, we admit,—still it is with a view to it that he acts, and consequently he must be precise and punctilious as to forms. True religion makes use of outward rites for a different purpose; their meaning, and the feelings of the heart with which they are performed are every thing, and we are consequently held to far less punctilious exactness as to forms. The vague and general terms in which these rites were instituted, show, as we have already once or twice remarked, that our Savior took this view of them. "*Do this* in remembrance of me." What is meant by *doing this*? What is *this*, precisely? How much is included in it. Does it mean, *Eat and drink*, in remembrance of me, or *Eat bread and drink wine*, or *Eat bread and drink wine, together*, or *Eat bread and drink wine together after a supper*. I might go on so indefinitely, adding circumstance after circumstance, and inquire how many of all are meant to be included in the phrase "Do THIS." The general practice of Christians has decided to stop at the third of the above steps, that is, Doing this, means *Eat bread and drink wine, together*, in remembrance of me; but they would probably find it difficult to show

why they imitate the Savior's example in respect to the nature of the food, and to partaking of it in an assembly of Christians, and not in the many other circumstances which were a part of the transaction then, but are not so now. It was in the night,— females were excluded,— there was a supper before the ceremony,— and this supper was an annual festival. By common consent we exclude all these circumstances, in interpreting the phrase "Do this." I have said it would be difficult to show why we go just so far as we do, and no farther, in interpreting the language; I mean it would be difficult to find grounds for precisely the selection which has, by common consent, been made, in any thing which was actually said and done on the occasion. But by taking the views of the nature and design of religious rites, which are presented above, the case is clear. The moral meaning and the moral influence of the ceremony being all that are essential, we are regulated by them, in regard to the degree of precision with which we follow the example set us. So far as is convenient, and only so far, we conform in respect to the food; so as not unnecessarily to vary from the original circumstances. We *come together* to celebrate the ordinance; for the assembling of Christians for the purpose, is a circumstance which contributes to the moral effect. We admit females, for the same reason. We do not insist on its being after a supper, nor at an annual festival, nor in the night, nor in an upper chamber, for all these, though doubtless they were the circumstances under which the institution was established, have no share in the production of the effect. The whole christian world most evidently takes this view of the ordinance, in practice; and our Savior would undoubtedly have been more precise and specific in his directions, if he had intended that we should take any other view.

I have dwelt, perhaps, longer on this subject, than

No dispute on this subject. Principles universally applicable. Formalists

many readers will think necessary, because it is one, they will say, on which there is no dispute. This is the very reason why I have made it the occasion of presenting what, it seems to me, is the true view of the ceremonial aspects of Christianity. The principles, which appear clear and plain here, because the mind can look at them uninfluenced by any bias, are universally applicable, and it is of immense consequence that every mind which is shaping its views of religious truth, should entertain right views here. There are formalists in all denominations of Christians, and perhaps quite as many in those which, in theory, are most decided in their rejection of forms. As society advances, and as new denominations arise, new religious customs gradually grow up, established first by a few leading Christians, and acquiring, in process of years, a very strong ascendency over the mind. There is no harm in this, if it is always borne in mind, that these are all *means*, not *ends*, and that moral effect on the heart and life is the only object which is ultimately valuable. There is a great tendency in the human mind to forget this, and to substitute the sign for the thing signified,— to rest upon the mere form,— and to attach that importance to a precise compliance with the circumstances of its original institution, which belongs only to the moral power it should have over the heart. By feeling and acting thus, we leave the spirit of Christianity, and approach towards the practices and feelings of pagan superstition, where form is all, and spirituality nothing. We go to different lengths in this approximation, and in some cases, the whole journey is made, and the professing Christian, in the frigid formality of his observances, seems to come out almost entirely upon the pagan ground. The reader will, very probably, charge such a fault, however, upon other denominations, not upon his own; but there is unfortunately, no monopoly of this sin. Where it would

be perhaps least expected, it sometimes most decidedly appears. Many a congregationalist attends his private meeting, or stands up to hear an extemporaneous prayer with as much of the spirit of the formalist, as ever a Catholic felt when counting his beads, or burning candles before the picture of the virgin. Substituting the forms for the spirit of Christianity, is one of the inveterate and universal habits of the human soul;— interwoven with all its feelings, and as difficult to be eradicated as any one. Its action is less *apparent* in those denominations whose modes of government and of worship are not precisely arranged, but it is not less *real;*— and how much less *common* it is, is perhaps more doubtful, than is generally supposed.

Understand then, Christian, what is the true nature and design of a religious ceremony, whether it was instituted by Christ, or has gradually grown up as a religious custom, in the denomination with which you are connected. Consider well that its whole value, and its whole power, consists in its *spiritual effect* on the heart and conscience. See that you secure this, and never surrender your heart to the deadening influence of scrupulous attachmemt to mere external ceremony.

There is one error on this subject into which we are very likely to fall, and of which we are more especially in danger, in proportion as we more fully adopt the views above presented. The danger is this, that we shall pertinaciously insist that other Christians, and other denominations particularly, shall come precisely to our standard in regard to this subject. Now since our Savior left his directions so general, there must inevitably be a difference of opinion among Christians in regard to the precision with which we must imitate the circumstances of the first establishment of these ceremonies; in fact it is not improbable that the different circumstances and relations of society, render some variety desirable. Now each

body of Christians is bound to act according to its own ideas of the Savior's wishes, and the rest ought not to complain. Suppose, for example, a Christian church were to come to the conclusion that they ought to make use of the wine of Palestine for the ordinance of the Lord's supper. They are honest in this opinion, we will suppose, and at a considerable expense send to Palestine and procure a supply, and always make use of it at their communion seasons. We suppose them to be mistaken,—yet still they are honest, and really think that the Savior intended them to comply in this particular, with his example. They gather therefore quietly by themselves, and celebrate the supper according to their own views of the requisitions of their Lord. Of course they must think that other churches are not complying, and must say so; and though they may admit that their members are sincere and devoted Christians, they cannot consider them as performing aright their official duty as a Christian church. Now what, most plainly, is the duty of other churches in such a case? Why, to leave these their brethren unmolested, and in peace at their own communion table, to comply with the directions of their Lord according to their own understanding of them; to do this pleasantly and good-humoredly, too, without any taunts and reproaches about their uncharitableness and censoriousness and closeness of communion.

In the same manner if one denomination suppose some circumstances in the mode of ordaining pastors, or admitting members to the churches, or some views of christian duty, to be essential, while they are not so regarded by others, what ought the others to do? Why simply to allow them to pursue their own course, unmolested and in peace. They are bound to act according to their own views of the wishes of the Savior. If they do honestly consider that some conditions with which you have not complied, are essential to a proper celebra-

tion of the Lord's supper, they cannot consistently, however much they may esteem your piety, admit you to their table until you have complied with them. You ought not then, in such a case, to stand knocking at the door and demanding entrance;—you ought to go quietly and spread a table for yourselves. They do not prevent it. They simply say, our views and yours differ as to what in this point is essential;—we must be governed by our convictions,—therefore in this point, and this only, we must separate.

In the same manner, if a class of Christians think that a certain mode of ordination is the only valid one, or that certain views of religious truth are essential, they cannot of course include those who differ from them in these respects in the circle of *official* ministerial intercourse. There is no bigotry or intolerance in this. There is certainly no bigotry or intolerance, in a man's doing what he himself thinks is right, if he does not molest his neighbors, or prevent, by other means than moral ones, their doing what they think right. Nor is there any, in a church's confining its official measures, strictly to the field which is marked out by its own views of official duty. The world is wide enough for other churches to act freely according to *their* ideas. No; the intolerance and bigotry is all on the other side. It is not in the quiet firmness with which a church guards its doors according to its own conscientious ideas of duty, but it is in loud vociferations of the crowd which has assembled without, demanding admittance as a right. If there was but one communion table, and but one pulpit in the world, the majority in possession should indeed be careful whom they excluded; and if the disciples of Christ were, or ought to be, united into one great denomination, they who should obtain the control of its measures, would rest under a most fearful responsibility. But this the Savior undoubtedly never intended He made no arrangement

for such an organization, and did not command it. In carrying out his principles, and in extending them throughout the globe, Christians unite themselves in companies, and link themselves together by ties, just as they please: and each band must be governed by its own views of truth and duty, and ought to be left without molestation by the rest. We may try to alter by argument, the views themselves, but not complain of their acting according to them, as long as they are entertained; nor load them with opprobrious epithets, because their views of church policy, compel them to deny our regular official connexion with it. Their denial can do us no harm, if they leave us to act unmolested in our own communion, and we ought to leave them to act unmolested in theirs.

The celebration of the Lord's supper is particularly described again in the New Testament, viz. in the epistle to the Corinthians. Paul there tells his readers that there were a great many *weak* and *sickly* Christians in their church, and attributes it to their negligence in respect to this ordinance. There are weak and sickly Christians every where, and the communion service, if it was properly understood, would be the most effectual means of restoring them to health. In bringing this chapter to a conclusion, then, it may be well to call the attention of the reader a little to this point. How shall we celebrate the Lord's supper? How shall we secure the spiritual effect of it, according to the views presented in the preceding pages?

Consider what the ceremony means. It is intended to bring to our minds the death of Christ,—to remind us of his blood flowing, and his body lacerated *for us*,—"for the remission of sins," as is expressly stated. In order to eat the bread then, and drink the cup, worthily, this must be in mind, and it is the moral and spiritual effect of this

truth upon the heart, which is to be chiefly sought for when we come around the table of the Lord.

"It is preparatory lecture to-night," says one of the weak, sickly Christians pointed at by Paul, in the passage above quoted. "Let me see,— shall I go?"

He has been all day engaged in the world, and his heart is still full of its interests and cares. On the other hand, there is the *habit* of going to the preparatory lecture. After a contest of a few minutes, between these two, the habit, or, as it perhaps should be called, the attachment to form, conquers, though he fancies that the victory is gained by christian principle. He walks along at the appointed time, either thinking of his worldly plans, or else indulging a feeling of self-complacence at his superior interest in religious duty, when he sees how few of his brethren are to be there.

He listens to the discourse, much as he would to any other sermon, and applies the general considerations it presents, with the same fidelity, to his own case, that this class of Christians usually exemplify. On his way home, he may make a remark or two about the discourse, or the smallness of the number present, and then the world, even if it was actually excluded while he was in the house of God, which is more than doubtful, presses in upon him again. The approaching solemnity passes from his mind, until, on the next sabbath, when he is walking up the aisle to his pew, his eye catches the plate arranged for the ordinance, and he says to himself, "Oh, it is communion to-day."

During the administration of the ordinance, he endeavors to listen to the pastor's remarks, but he finds it somewhat difficult to attend to them. Some few very vague and general religious impressions pass through his mind, and when the cup is handed to him, he looks serious, and takes his portion with a very reverential air, and something like a general supplication for forgiveness,

and for greater measures of holiness, pass through his mind. There is something like a slight feeling of impatience at the delay while the elements are distributing to the others. And yet is not impatience, exactly,— but he has nothing to do with his thoughts, and he feels a little satisfaction when the ceremony is over. It is very slight, and he will not acknowledge it even to himself,— but it is in his heart; and he walks home feeling that he has been discharging a duty, which, though it was not an unpleasant one certainly, he still is glad that it is done.

It is a dead letter; a lifeless, heartless, useless form; and thousands of Christians every where, thus pervert the ordinance which God designed to be perhaps one of the most efficacious means of grace that the Christian is permitted to enjoy.

Now in order clearly to understand the mode in which this ordinance ought to be celebrated, so as to secure its spiritual blessings, let the reader call to mind what was said in the close of the last chapter, respecting the means by which the soul is to come to Christ in faith, so as to secure forgiveness for the past, and spiritual strength for the future, through a *union with him.* The great design of the Lord's supper is simply to *renew this union.* When we first repent of sin, and return to duty, we come to the Savior, and seek such a connexion with him, that our sins may be pardoned through his sufferings and death, and that we may have strength furnished us from him, to go on our way safely in future. If this change was entire and complete,— if it overturned for ever the dominion of sin, and established the perpetual and perfect reign of holiness, we should perhaps never have occasion to repeat the transaction, and our celebration of the supper would be simply an act of grateful remembrance,— a memorial merely of the Savior's love. But it is not so. Sin continues its hold. It is always

ready to rise to re-assert successfully its power, and the communion season returns to us from time to time, to give us an opportunity of breaking free again and again, and seeking by the moral power of the sufferings and death we celebrate, new relief for the conscience, new pardon for sin, new spiritual life, new peace and higher happiness. Whenever therefore it returns, it should bring us to a most thorough and effectual investigation of our standing and progress as disciples of the Savior. It is the time of periodical settlement between our souls and God, when the account should be most carefully examined, and all sins brought out fully to view, every secret hold which the world has upon us should be discovered and broken, and thus the soul should be brought into a state to give itself away anew, and without reserve to its Master's work. The world and its cares are to be left behind, all past sins fully examined, and fully acknowledged, and the responsibility for them is to be brought and laid upon him who is mighty to save. Peace would then return. The collected anxieties and the troubles of conscience would all disappear. Habits of sin beginning to be formed would be broken up, and the soul refreshed and restored, and reunited to its Savior, would have made, at each successive return of the solemn ceremony, a decided advance in holiness and happiness. But how different is it in fact. We come to the scene of our Master's sufferings and death, and bring the world all with us. One comes with his quarrels, another with his business; this brother leads some darling sin in by the hand, and that one is cold and hard in heart, looking on with stupid indifference at the solemn symbols. Of one thing, however, we may be sure. The design of this ordinance is very clear, and God has indicated very plainly what are the feelings with which he wishes us to observe it; and he has left, in the most decisive language, his warning of the danger of our thus

coming and profaning what he has made sacred. The institution was designed to have a deep meaning, and to produce a powerful effect. By coming without examination, and without preparation of heart, and without a desire for the spiritual blessings it is designed to procure, we are doing all we can to degrade what God has elevated,— to destroy its character and power, and its spiritual influence, and to bring it to contempt.

I need not repeat the language in which God has threatened those who eat and drink unworthily. It would be plain, if such language had not been used, that God must consider the intrusion of worldliness and sin, into the places which he had endeavored to make sacred, as an offence of the highest character. The prosperity of his kingdom, in this world, depends more upon the purity of his church, and the elevation of its standard of piety, than upon any thing else; and throughout the whole of the New Testament, no design is more apparent, or more earnestly pursued, than that of separating his friends, by a clear line of demarcation, from his enemies, and keeping his church pure. The worldly Christians, or rather the worldly professors of religion, crowd around this line, and obliterate all its distinctness. They allure many a sincere follower to it, who would otherwise keep away, and thus they are thwarting, most directly and most effectually, the progress of the Savior's kingdom. If all the cold and worldly and indifferent professors of religion could be exchanged, each for ten boisterous and inveterate enemies, piety might proclaim a jubilee at the brightening prospects of her cause.

But what shall we do, perhaps some one may ask, if we find, when the time of the communion season arrives, that our hearts are not in the right state,— shall we stay away?— I have nothing to say about staying away. What you had better do, if you are a professing Christian, and will not give up the world and sin, when the

time arrives for renewing your solemn consecration of yourself to your Maker's service, I do not know. It is a sad alternative, if you are fixed upon it, either to disobey Christ's command altogether, or to comply hypocritically. I am sure I cannot tell you which to choose. One thing however is certain, that if you had any adequate ideas of your obligations and your accountability, — if you felt at all what it is to go into the very presence of the Savior, and among his best friends,— yourself a secret enemy; if, in a word, you could see the solemn ceremony which he instituted as he sees it, you would be afraid to go and be the Judas there.

"And when they had sung an hymn they went out into the Mount of Olives." The Savior and his disciples stood around their table and sang an hymn. It was the Redeemer's last public act, his final farewell. He had presided over many an assembly, guiding their devotions or explaining to them the principles of religion. Sometimes the thronging multitudes had gathered around him on the sea shore; sometimes they had crowded into a private dwelling, and sometimes he sat in the synagogue, and explained the law. But the last moment had come; he was presiding in the last assembly, which, by his mortal powers, he should ever address, and when the hour for separation came, the last tones in which his voice uttered itself, were heard in song.

What could have been their hymn? Its sentiments and feelings, they who can appreciate the occasion, may perhaps conceive, but what were its words? Beloved disciple, why didst thou not record them? They should have been sung in every nation, and language and clime. We would have fixed them in our hearts, and taught them to our children, and when we came together, to commemorate our Redeemer's sufferings, we would never have separated without singing *his* parting hymn.

Dramatic interest of the narrative of the crucifixion.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CRUCIFIERS.

"The Lord looketh on the heart."

An instance of as high dramatic beauty and interest as the Bible furnishes, is to be found in the arrangement of the circumstances connected with the great final scene which it portrays. Fiction could not have arranged these circumstances with more admirable adaptation to the production of effect, and yet nature and truth had never more complete, or more evident control. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the picture, is the number of distinct and strongly marked characters which appear as actors. Here is irreligion in all the variety of its forms. Hostility to God sends its representatives in all the leading shapes which it assumes, to exhibit themselves conspicuously here, in the view of all the world.

This was intended for our instruction. Characters portrayed in the New Testament are portrayed for the purpose of throwing light upon duty, or upon the nature and tendencies of sin; but we shield ourselves from all influence in this case, on account of the enormity of the consequences which resulted. No man thinks of comparing himself with Pontius Pilate; and Christians, though they often quote the example of Peter, seldom think that they have been guilty of his sin. The enormity of the crime, to which sin, in this case, led, has invested the whole transaction with such a character, as, in the view of men, to place it entirely beyond the region of reproof and warning to them. One great design, unquestionably, in allowing this scene to be acted, was to let the whole human family see, what disastrous effects would be produced, in peculiar circumstances, by very common sins.

Its moral effect often lost. Three stages of guilt.

We evade the intended effect altogether, by setting the whole transaction aside;—disconnecting it from all ordinary exhibitions of human nature, on account of the extraordinariness of the *effects*, when we ought to unite it with them, on account of the commonness of the *cause;* and thus, though there are unquestionably thousands even in the Christian church, and in fair standing, who are habitually governed by the principles of Judas Iscariot, there is not one in the Christian *world*, so degraded and so abandoned, that he would not resent being called by his name.

This is owing to wrong ideas of the nature of guilt, as it is recognised by God's law; and we shall here devote a few paragraphs to this subject, both because it is of general importance to the young Christian to have clear ideas respecting it, and because a right understanding of it is absolutely essential to enable us to receive the proper moral lessons taught us by the narrative of the crucifixion of the Savior.

Guilt then, as it generally exhibits itself in this world, exists in three stages, proceeding regularly from the first to its consummation in the last. These stages are more or less distinctly marked in all the various cases which occur. We may however take as a convenient instance for illustration, the sin of Joseph's brethren in selling him as a slave. Let us look a few moments at this case.

The first stage of their guilt consists in the indulgence of *envious and malignant feelings*. They were the feelings which ultimately led to the commission of the crime. It is said "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him," and when he innocently told them his dream, they said, "'shalt thou indeed reign over us?' and they hated him yet the more for his words." Here now is guilt, but it is the guilt of *feeling*, not of *conduct*. Here are no overt acts of violence or of unkindness,—not even any plans or determinations to commit such acts. It is

First stage; guilty feeling. Second stage; guilty intentions.

the heart alone which has gone astray. They are filled with feelings of envy and hatred towards their brother, and though, as is very often the case at the present day, when a heart is filled with hateful passions, the brow might have been smooth, and the conduct right, and even though the tone of voice had been gentle and kind, and not a glance of the eye had betrayed the hidden anger,—still, on the principles of God's law, they had committed great sin. It was not the sin of action, nor of intention; but of *the heart.*

The second stage of their guilt consists in their *plans* and *determinations.* They began to form the design to do some violence to their brother. This stage, which it will be readily perceived, is distinct from the other, and decidedly in advance of it, is described in the following words.

"When they saw him coming they *conspired against him to slay him.* They said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams!"

This is plainly a distinct stage from the other, and in advance of it. A man may cherish revengeful and malignant thoughts, and yet never intend to carry them forward into action. There are a thousand considerations of policy which tend to restrain him. There is the voice of public opinion, the fear of punishment, the dread of remorse; and while he hates his brother, and cordially wishes him injury, his hand may be held back by the thousand circumstances of restraint, with which a kind Providence has hemmed him in. By and by, however, the rising, swelling flood of wicked emotion breaks its barriers. He prepares himself for the execution of deeds of iniquity His mind passes from the mere indulgence of the wicked feeling itself, to the altogether different state, of deliber-

ately intending to commit some open acts of sin. He has thus advanced one distinct step towards the consummation of guilt.

Again, the third and last stage of this disease is *the open act.* It consummates the guilt, and seals the consequences. In this case, they took their brother, and let him down into a deep pit in the wilderness, intending to leave him in its dismal solitude, to die of hunger and despair. Avarice, however, pleaded for his life, and, as by selling him, they could get twenty pieces of silver, they changed his destiny from death to slavery. They sold him to a wandering tribe of half savage strangers, and quietly saw him led away, they scarcely knew where, or for what; though they could have expected nothing for the brother whom they had thus betrayed, but a life of suffering and toil and chains.

Such are the three distinct stages of progress in guilt. And let it be understood that the distinction between these stages is not, by any means, peculiar to this case, nor even more striking here, than it usually is in fact. They all happen to be distinctly noticed and described by the sacred writer, which makes this example peculiarly suited to our purpose. But in all cases, when open sin is perpetrated at all, it advances step by step in this way. First come the guilty *feelings*,— burning in the heart, and though restrained for a time, they soon acquire strength which external influence can no longer control. Then comes the guilty *intention*, when the mind decides against conscience and duty, and prepares itself to go forth to sin; and finally, the *open act* of iniquity closes the scene. It is true, that in many cases, these stages succeed each other with almost instantaneous rapidity. A man receives a sudden and deep injury from his enemy; —he grasps a glittering dagger, and plunges it to his heart. All is over in a moment, but the sin, though instantaneous, is complicated, and a very slight degree of

care in making the analysis, will enable any one to distinguish between the *feelings*, and the *intention*, and the *action*, which it clearly comprises.

Now it is the first of these stages, which the law of God chiefly regards; for it is plain that it is this alone which is the true index of character. The rest depends, in far too great a degree, on accidental circumstances, to be taken much into the account in estimating guilt. Whether Joseph's brethren, for example, would ever form any plan for doing him injury, must evidently have depended upon the occurrence of favorable opportunities of carrying such a plan into effect. In a Christian country, the circumstances of society would render such an act of iniquity as this, impracticable, and public opinion is in such a state, as to operate as a most powerful, and in most cases, an effectual restraint, against any such deeds of violence. And yet there are thousands of cases, where the feelings between brother and brother are precisely similar to those which, in this case, led to the commission of an atrocious crime.

Now it is the almost universal practice in this world, to attach far too much relative importance to the overt acts of sin, and too little, to the state of heart from which those acts proceed. The cause of this is two-fold. First, men have very inadequate conceptions of the spirituality of God's law, in any respect; and secondly, human laws necessarily relate almost exclusively to external acts, and public sentiment feels the influence, and imbibes the spirit of public laws. Human laws, as we have already intimated in another place, and for another purpose, have an object entirely different from that of divine.

Their aim is, not to distribute to every man the just recompense which he deserves, nor to purify hearts, and bring back sinners to holiness and peace. These things

are not the ultimate design of human laws. Their object is simply to *protect the community*, from the aggressions of evil men. Now a wicked feeling does, comparatively, no immediate injury to society, and as protection is the aim of law and government among men, they yield the ground of malicious and envious feelings, and even intentions; and taking a stand upon the nearest limit of the open act, they say to human passions, "Hither shalt thou come, but *no farther*." It is here alone, that human law arms itself with its penalties, and this is the whole field of its conflict with the wickedness of man.

God's law has, however, a very different object. Its design is not merely to repress the outbreaking of sin, so as to protect men from its injuries,—but to remove and eradicate for ever the guilty spirit. It seeks not to arrest the consequences, but to destroy the cause. Its design is to ascertain the true character, to deal with every one as his true character deserves, and, if possible, to bring the wandering and miserable sinner back to duty and to happiness. Human laws say therefore, to man, "Take care that you never carry your sins so far as to encroach upon your neighbor's rights,—we must secure protection." God's law says to him, "You must not sin at all." The one denounces punishments in proportion to the *injury* which is done,—the other regulates its penalties by the exact measure of the *secret guilt* incurred. A human government grasps a man who has plunged his knife into his neighbor's bosom; but when a skilful physician tries his power,—stops the flowing blood, allays the rising fever, and saves the endangered life, it immediately relaxes its grasp, and says in spirit, "Go free from the charge of murder; the physician who stopped the *injury*, has saved your life. We look only at consequences." But the divine government will arrest the criminal as he endeavors to move away, and say to him, "Stop, you are a murderer. God looks not at the con-

sequences, but at the guilt. Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer."

For these, and perhaps other reasons, human laws, and consequently to a great extent, public sentiment, has condemned, almost exclusively, in this world, the open acts of wickedness; and thus men, if their conduct is fair, are and always have been prone to consider it as of very little consequence, what corrupt desires, or raging passions possess their hearts. If the fires do not flash out to view, they care little how luridly they burn within. But God sees not as man sees. He regards *the heart* as the true seat of virtue and of vice, and the external conduct, which we notice so attentively, he almost passes by; his eye looks through all these exterior coverings, and, penetrating to the inmost soul, he comes to a contest with iniquity in the very heart and centre of its reign.

How obvious and unquestionable is the principle that the external conduct is regulated quite as much by the circumstances in which one is placed, as by the true character; and that therefore external conduct is no safe criterion of character. A thousand illustrations of this principle might be drawn from the most common occurrences of life. A lady of elegance and refinement, moving in high rank in society, surrounded by circumstances which most effectually forbid the open exhibition of the evil passions of the heart, by any of the rough forms in which they often show themselves, cherishes, we will suppose, envy or jealousy, which soon ripens into anger towards an acquaintance; and in peculiar circumstances, it is possible that she may be almost continually under the influence of these feelings, so that she lies down at night, and rises in the morning, with these bad passions rankling in her bosom. But in the presence of the object of her displeasure, and surrounded by society, how possible is it for all external indication of her feel-

ings to be restrained. Her brow is smooth, her eye is mild,— her tone is gentle;— and so completely have the circumstances in which Providence has placed her, trained her to the necessity and to the habit of civility, that she dares not transgress. A rude and savage boy, with the same passions, and precisely the same state of heart, not being controlled by these circumstances of restraint, displays his passions by open malediction, or by clubs and stones. Now how different are the views which the world takes of such cases as these. And I am far from saying that they must necessarily be *equal* in guilt. The passions which are the same in kind, in both, may differ in degree. What I wish to say, is, that God looks at the passions of the heart, and not at the open exhibitions of them, which the circumstances of the individual may lead him to make. This is what is meant by the passage, "Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer." So with all other sins. A man's character for honesty does not, in the eye of God, depend upon his not stealing, but upon his being, in heart, cordially willing and desirous that all around him should enjoy fully their rights; his character for benevolence, not upon his deeds of charity, but upon his heartfelt desires that all connected with him should be happy;— his character for truth, not upon his refraining from directly falsifying his word,— but upon his being sincere and honest in heart. Mankind do not consider these distinctions. A very large part of the virtue of this world is the virtue of circumstances, not of character; that is, it is no virtue at all; and yet it is esteemed and applauded by men, as if it originated in the loftiest moral principle.

But the reader may perhaps inquire what these remarks have to do with the crucifixion of the Savior. They have this to do with it. The principles we have been considering show us that though the crucifixion, as *an event*,—*a transaction*, may have been extraordinary

and dreadful in the extreme, it does not thence follow that as *sin* it was very extraordinary. Certain sinful propensities and passions in that case led to consequences, which cannot in ordinary cases flow from them. But precisely the same principles and passions may reign in the heart, and load it with an equal burden of guilt, though the circumstances in which the actor is placed, may be such as entirely to modify, or even effectually to restrain the results. If we wish then to derive the intended advantage from this portion of Scripture history, we must consider these things,—we must make these discriminations, between the sin itself, and the particular forms in which, from the peculiar circumstances of the case, it then assumed. We must look at the *characters* of the actors, rather than their deeds; for in character, we may be similar to them, though from the entirely different circumstances in which we are placed, we have not, and we never can have the opportunity to commit the crimes they perpetrated. I shall endeavor, therefore, as I go on to the examination of the story, to bring to view, as clearly as possible, the characters of those concerned in it: with particular reference, too, to the aspects which similar characters would assume at the present day. If I am not very greatly deceived, Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot, and even the Roman soldiers, have far more imitators and followers, than is generally supposed, and that too, within the very pale of the Christian church.

We left the Savior, at the close of the last chapter, going out, late at night, with his disciples, from the place where they had held their last assembly. They passed out of the gate, and went down the hill, across the rivulet which flowed through the valley, and ascended the mount of Olives on the other side. One however was absent.

Judas Iscariot. His probable character and plans.

Judas Iscariot, it will be recollected, had left the assembly some time before. He had his arrangements to mature for delivering the Savior to the soldiers appointed to make him prisoner. It seems that the leading priests had been desirous of taking him, for the purpose of bringing him to trial, but they did not dare to do it openly, for fear of an uproar among the people; their only other plan, therefore, was to find out his private retreats, and send an armed band for him at some time when he was alone with his friends. This plan it was difficult to execute, for Jesus generally withdrew himself very privately, when his work was done, and they did not know how to find him. Judas relieved them of the difficulty.

But who was Judas? let us look a little at his history and character.

There seems to be no evidence against the supposition that he was just such a man as any other of those worldly professors of religion, which are to be found by thousands in the Christian church at the present day. It is plain that he was not that abandoned and hardened reprobate which he is very generally supposed to have been: if so, he would not have hung himself, when he found what were the consequences of his crime. It does not seem to be at all improbable, that, when he joined the Savior's cause, he thought he was sincere. A man would not be likely to connect himself with such a cause for the express purpose of making money. This is possible, but certainly very improbable. It seems far more reasonable to suppose, that he became a professed disciple, as thousands do at the present day, with his heart unchanged, though not aware of his own true character.

They who have a strong love for the world, have often no uncommon share of worldly wisdom; or, at least, those who love money know well how to take care of it; and

Judas, like many others since his day, was appointed to a trust which proved a very dangerous one to him. In fact, the very love for such a trust which fitted him to discharge the duties of it succesfully, made those duties very dangerous to him. It is altogether probable that love of money acquired its ascendency over him very gradually. It almost always does. Very few persons have the hardihood to unite themselves with the Christian church deliberately, with the design of making their connexion with it a mere source of profit; but very many who join it professedly with other designs, do, in fact, gradually turn their connexion with it to this purpose. They are deceived at first about the sincerity of their motives; they feel some sort of interest in religion, which interest they mistake for genuine piety; but as it is without foundation it soon disappears, the world gradually regains its hold, and as it comes back and fixes its reign, it leads the man to avail himself of every advantage which he can derive from his new position, to increase his own earthly stores. At first he does this without particular injury to the cause he has espoused, but soon the claims of interest and of his master's service come into slight collision. The latter yields, though he is so blinded he is not aware of it. The cases become more frequent and more decided; but the progress of blindness goes on as fast as the progress of sin, so that he continues undisturbed, though he is as really betraying the cause of his master, as if he was actually guiding an armed band to his private retreat.

There is no end to the cases which might be stated in exemplification of this. We will suppose one or two. A question arises in a certain town about the erection of a place of public worship. The situation of the building will affect the value of the property in its vicinity, and a certain wealthy professor of religion, with reference solely to this effect upon his property, is determined that

the building shall be in one place, while the rest of the church are determined it shall be in another. To make the case simple, we will suppose that the majority are guided by good principles in their selection, that they consult the best interests of the Savior's cause in the decision they have made, and consequently that the fault is all on the side of the single wealthy man. Such is however his influence, that he can throw embarrassment, and insuperable difficulty in the way of the rest. He divides the Savior's friends, alienates one from another, and is thus the instrument of destroying the peace of the church, and extinguishing the light of its piety. Years do not heal the wounds he makes in the Savior's cause. He betrays it, and he betrays it for money,—just as truly as if he had been directly bribed by thirty pieces of silver to deliver up his Lord. In fact he does even a greater injury than that; and it is by no means certain, which will be found to have incurred the heaviest doom, he who sold the Savior's life to Roman soldiers, or he who, from the same motive, turns traitor to the church, and breaks down the barriers for the admission of spiritual foes. The latter certainly betrays a more valued object, and delivers it too, to more dreadful foes; for Jesus Christ has given most abundant proof that he loves the church far more than his own personal safety, and that he fears discord and hatred and spiritual death, far more than the insults and injuries of Roman soldiers, or even than the unutterable sufferings of hour after hour upon the cross.

But let us take another case. It is that of a worldly pastor, who consents to receive in charge a branch of his master's church, when his motive is his pay. He neglects his appropriate work, and devotes his time and his attention, and gives all his heart to the work of increasing his stores. He does it privately and silently, but the world around him soon understand it. They are

quick to perceive hypocrisy, and to detect the true character of worldliness, however dexterously it may clothe itself in the garb of piety. The money-getting disciple thinks, perhaps, that all is going on well. He performs his duties with punctilious formality, but his heart is not in the work, and the souls within his influence are only chilled by the coldness of the form. In a word, the cause committed to him is betrayed,— it is betrayed, too, for money; and if it is true that in the sight of God, the heart, and not the particular acts by which the heart may manifest itself, is the criterion of character, he must expect to stand with Judas when the time of reckoning shall come.

How many times has a man of business, professing to love the Savior, betrayed his cause by violating his principles, and brought open disgrace upon it, in the eyes of the world. He deals in commodities which are destructive to the souls and bodies of men, or he acts on principles which are entirely inconsistent with christian character. Unjust, oppressive, and miserly, he disgraces the name which he has hypocritically assumed. But he accomplishes his object;—he acquires the money for which he is willing to sell his master's cause. Even Judas was paid. He secures also his other object, of being called a Christian. He however betrays the cause. For the mass of mankind bring down their conceptions of religion to the rank of the lowest pretender to it whom they can find; so that he who serves the world and sin, while he pretends to be a Christian, does not generally disgrace himself, he degrades Christianity. Still he accomplishes his objects. He is called a Christian, and makes his money; but he must rank among the traitors at last.

Judas had no idea, probably, that any very serious consequences would have resulted from what he was about to do He might have known, indeed, had he

thought about it, but he probably thought of little but his thirty pieces of silver. If he did reflect at all, it was probably only to quiet himself with the excuses, which, in similar circumstances, men always make; such as that it was his duty to increase his property by all honest means,— that there could be no great harm in merely introducing the soldiers to the Savior,— that if he did not give them the information they desired, somebody else certainly would. All the ordinary excuses would have applied perfectly here.

However this might be, the wretched man went at midnight to the place of rendezvous; and while he and the soldiers who were to accompany him, were receiving their directions and forming their plans in the city, the Savior was bending under the burden of those intolerable but mysterious sufferings, which have thrown an eternal gloom over the garden of Gethsemane. Upon what a scene the moon, which was always full at the time of the Jewish passover, must have looked down, at this sad hour.

It is midnight; the moon is high, and the streets of Jerusalem are deserted and still, except when the footsteps of some solitary passenger re-echo a moment upon the ear, and then die away. Beyond the walls, even deeper silence and solitude reign; every bird is at its rest, and in the still night air, we can hear the brook murmuring through the valley. In the garden on the other side too, the consecrated place of prayer, every zephyr is hushed, every leaf is in repose, and the moon is silvering, with its cold light, the outlines of the foliage, and brightening on the distant hills.

It was midnight, the hour of stillness and rest, but yet the whole scene was not one of repose. The scattered disciples of Jesus waited for their Master, who was bending down in his lonely retreat, under the weight

The coming forth of the soldiers. Apparent discrepancy.

of suffering which we can neither appreciate nor comprehend. And in some lurking place in the silent city, the rough soldiers were lighting their lanterns, and girding on their weapons, and forming their plans. Presently they issue forth, and pass on from street to street, now in light and now in shadow, stealing along probably in careful silence, lest they might arouse some of the people and provoke the interference which their masters dreaded. At this moment, what a spectacle must the whole scene have presented to any one who could have looked down upon the whole. The dark betrayer, walking in advance of his band with cautious steps, half fearing, and half rejoicing in his anticipated success;— the careless soldiers following, to execute a work which they probably did not distinguish from any other similar deed which they often performed; — the disciples, scattered through the valley, and in the garden, some probably anxious and unhappy, and others, overcome with bodily and mental exhaustion, sunk in sleep; — Jesus Christ, struggling in solitude, under the pressure of sufferings which overwhelmed him with indescribable agitation, and almost unnerved his soul. There must have been something uncommon in an anguish, which could carry the Savior's fortitude to its utmost limit. On the cross he was calm.

But we must go on with the story. One of the most striking proofs of the genuineness and truth of the narratives of this transaction which are recorded in the New Testament, is the apparent discrepancy between the two accounts of the scene which occurred, when Judas and his band arrived at the place to which Jesus had retired. That this discrepancy may be the better understood, we place the two accounts in opposite columns

The two accounts. Fearlessness of truth. Explanation.

MATT. 26: 47—50.

And while he yet spake, lo Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; hold him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail Master, and kissed him.

And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they and laid hands on Jesus and took him.

JOHN 18: 3—8.

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches and weapons.

Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.

Fabricators of a story would never have left such a discrepancy as this; and yet it is precisely such an one, as two original witnesses would have been almost certain to have fallen into, in narrating the circumstances of such a case. Scenes of calm and quiet action, where but few individuals are concerned, and incidents succeed each other with quiet regularity, may be described perhaps in nearly the same language by different and independent observers;—but in a scene of tumult and confusion, where many are acting and talking together, each in a great degree regardless of the rest, faithful witnesses who describe what they actually see, will tell very different stories. A large number of the discrepancies of the Bible are of this character, and they are the most striking proofs of the fearless honesty of the witnesses who recorded the facts.

The encounter. Resistance. Binding the prisoner.

Judas came with a preconcerted part to perform. He had arranged every thing beforehand, and probably he had, as it were, every look and action committed to memory. He had braced himself up to his work, and had fixed its details with so much minuteness, that he could perform his part almost mechanically, as soon as the proper moment should arrive. This is human nature as it shows itself on all such occasions. It learns its task, when it has one of an agitating nature to perform, or is to act in any extraordinary emergency; and then it comes up to the moment of action, with a sort of mental momentum which carries it through, right or wrong, and leaves it very little power to modify its course, or to adapt it to any new or unexpected circumstances. Judas came with his plan thus formed; Jesus had also his own course marked out, and the almost mechanical determination of the one, came into collision with the fearless and lofty energy of the other. The soldiers fell back; perhaps they did not know till they saw him, who it was whom they were sent to bring; and in the confusion of the encounter, each witness has recorded what struck most forcibly his own observation.

There was a slight resistance, but Jesus stopped it, and surrendered himself a prisoner. The soldiers regained their courage, after the momentary alarm excited by the Savior's sudden appearance, and began to secure their victim. There was enough in their rough ferocity to terrify the disciples, and they fled. The soldiers made perhaps some effort to secure them too. They certainly endeavored a short time after, to seize a young man, on their way, who came out in his night dress to ascertain the cause of the commotion which he heard At any rate the disciples fled, and the soldiers had nothing to do but to secure their prisoner.

They bound him;—and binding, under such circumstances, is a very different thing from what most of our

readers would suppose. The cords are not drawn lightly around the wrists of a military prisoner. They secured him, and returned towards the city. The priests were too deeply interested in the triumphs they were about to enjoy, to wait quietly for the regular time of trial. Some of them even came out with the soldiers toward the place where Jesus was taken, and others assembled in the palace of the High Priest, and Jesus was taken directly into the midst of them. Here they spent some time in collecting their testimony, and framing their charges, and urging on each other to a higher pitch of excitement, and to more determined and inveterate hostility.

There might possibly be a case in which men might be deceived in regard to the character of a good man, and might press him very severely with the effects of their displeasure, from honest, though mistaken convictions of his guilt. That this, however, was not the case here, is very certain from the nature of the charges brought against the Savior at the different tribunals where he was successively brought to trial. These charges were *varied to suit circumstances*, and therefore could not have been honest. In this case, he was before the Jewish priests, and the accusation brought against him was, irreverence in speaking of what their religion taught them to hold sacred;—they called it blasphemy. This charge they attempted to prove from some expressions, perfectly innocent in the sense in which he had used them, and almost perfectly so, even with the meaning which they pretended to attach to them. They found it difficult to establish their charges by any witnesses they could procure, but they were soon satisfied in another way. When he began to talk about himself, he uttered what they called blasphemy, enough to convince them fully; and the High Priest rent his clothes with affected horror. They spent some time in gratifying their resentment and hatred, by insulting and tormenting their

victim in every possible way. He had pretended to be a prophet, and they accordingly blindfolded him, and then beat him, asking him to prophesy who it was that struck the blow. Jesus suffered it all in silence.

The conclusion of their deliberation, if such treatment of a helpless prisoner could be called deliberation, was, that he ought to die. But in the way of his death there was a very formidable difficulty, which must be particularly described.

Judea was, at this time, a Roman province. It had been conquered by the armies of the empire some years before, and was accordingly now, under Roman government. Now the policy which the Romans seem to have pursued, in maintaining their power over the countries which they subdued, was to leave the inhabitants as much as possible to their own customs and laws, interfering only in those great and important subjects which could not safely be left to the vanquished people. The command of all the forts, and of all the soldiers, they of course assumed themselves. They took the direction of all the important public measures, and they reserved, too, a control over the higher criminal cases which might occur in the administration of justice. Inferior punishment, the Jews might inflict, themselves, but they were not permitted to take *life* in retribution for crime, without the permission of their conquerors. Of course, then, there was no way by which they could procure the execution of Jesus, but by carrying him to the Roman government, and obtaining the sentence of death there.

But how could they do this? Their charge against him was blasphemy, and what would a Roman officer care about blasphemy. The governor was comparatively a stranger there, having been in possession of the government only six or eight years. He was a Roman, not a Jew; he took consequently little interest

The Roman governor. His hall. The Priests remain in the street.

in Jewish feelings, and felt no reverence for what the Jews held sacred. How to get a sentence of death confirmed by such a man, against a criminal charged with such a crime as blasphemy, was the question.

It could not be done. They knew it could not be done; for a Roman officer, as the event in this case showed, could understand the claims of justice, when his own interest or ambition did not interfere with them. If they go to Pilate therefore with their persecuted prisoner, they must have some more plausible pretext than the story of the blasphemy.

By this time, their number had probably much increased; and when the hour arrived, at which they could obtain admission at the Roman hall, they bound their prisoner again, and led him forth into the street. Attended and followed by a throng of his enemies, the Savior walked quietly on, until he arrived in front of the palace occupied by the Roman. They sent Jesus in, remaining outside in the street themselves,— *lest they should be defiled!* What perfectly good friends are superstition and sin, and with how little interference will they share the dominion of the heart. Here is a savage crowd, tyrannising over a defenceless and helpless man, in the extreme of injustice and cruelty; their blood is boiling with angry passions, and no obstacles or difficulties are sufficient to restrain them in their eagerness to secure the destruction of their victim; — and yet, thus excited, thus inflamed, and thus destitute of all moral principle, they stop at once, when they come to the doors of a Roman building, and will not enter it, for fear that *they shall be defiled!*

The Roman was a pagan, and his apartments were forbidden ground to them. The strictness of their law had prohibited even so slight a connexion as this, with idolatry; especially when they were about to celebrate any of the more solemn ordinances of the law. The

passover was at hand, and they must eat it. They could insult and torture an innocent victim, but they must not omit to eat the paschal lamb! They could stand burning with malice and rage in a Jewish street; but to cross the threshold of a pagan dwelling,— would never do. Every man there probably prided himself on his scruples,— his inflexible precision in obeying the law; but thought nothing of the loathsome and terrible corruption which had full possession of his heart. Whited sepulchres; the Savior had called them: What an exact comparison!

They were particularly scrupulous at this time, on account of the approaching passover, as the narrative informs us; but the same narrative states that the passover had been celebrated the evening before; for it was to keep this feast that Jesus and his disciples had met on the preceding evening. The apparent discrepancy is another of those marks of genuineness, which no skill can ever counterfeit. The occurrences of real life constitute a most complicated web, where a thousand actors, and a thousand events mingle and intertwine in the most intricate confusion. All is however, in fact, consistent, though no one eye can take in the whole. Through this congeries, truth takes its bold and unhesitating way, confident that it cannot find at any one point, any thing which is really inconsistent with what it is to meet with at another, and therefore it speaks freely of what it sees, and boldly exhibits every object which may lie in its track. It runs of course into apparent difficulties. It leaves interruptions and chasms, which additional light must correct and explain, and it is only when that additional light is fully furnished that we see, in all its perfection, the consistency and harmony of the whole. Fabrication cannot take such a course. She must *make* things consistent and plain, as she goes on; or if she leaves an apparent difficulty, there must be an explanation at hand.

Explanation. Judas and the Priests compared.

The researches of scholars have reconciled this apparent disagreement; in fact there are several considerations, each of which is sufficient to account for the language used. Perhaps the most important is, that there was a dispute at that time in regard to the day on which the passover should be kept;— some, relying simply on the declarations of scripture, celebrated it on one evening, and the priests and pharisees, following certain traditions, preferred the next. It is not necessary however, for our purpose, to dwell on this subject here.

The character exhibited by these priests is the second great variety which this whole transaction brings to view. Enmity to the Savior appears in them in very different forms from that which it assumed in Judas. His ruling passion was love of money,— theirs was love of place and power. They were *priests;* all their estimation in society, and all the virtue, on which they so confidently prided themselves, depended on the ceremonies of the Jewish law. Undermine these, and call public attention from ceremonial exactness to internal purity, and such an influence and such characters as theirs would be ruined. Jesus Christ had been doing this most effectually, and all their spiritual pride, ambition, and every worldly feeling was roused.

There is a great difference also between the actual appearances which were exhibited in the two cases. Judas was calm, the priests were furious. Judas endangered his master's life by cool, calculating treachery; the priests were loud and boisterous and urgent, in effecting his destruction. The former was the accessory, assisting others in what he never would have undertaken himself. The latter were the principals, originating every plan, and pressing it forward with the most open and determined energy.

The reason for this difference is, that the principles

which Jesus Christ was publishing, came at once to inevitable and direct collision with the ambitious views and feelings of the priests, while they were not thus aggressive in respect to the avarice of Judas. The Savior's *principles* did indeed as plainly forbid the avarice, but his *acts* did not come so directly in the way of its gratification. Judas was left to pursue uninterrupted his own plans, but the hollow hypocrisy of the Jews was not thus left. Every public address made by the Savior, was most directly undermining it. Judas therefore, remained quiet and undisturbed, while the priests were goaded on to fury. The ruling passion was gently *drawn out* of its retreat, in the former case, allured by the opportunity of gratifying itself by the ruin of its victim; in the latter, it was boldly assaulted in its den, and the contest was, of course, a desperate struggle for existence.

The spirit of the high priests reigns still in the world,—in many a heart which puts the splendor of forms, or the stability of an ecclesiastical organization, in place of the progress of pure, heartfelt piety. Many a pastor would prefer having a man in *his* congregation, rather than in another's church, and will really regret the progress of religion, if he sees its current flowing out of his own communion. How many times have professed friends of God stopped suddenly the progress of his cause, by contending about a division of the fruits of its success. They think they are punctilious for the order and regularity of the church. So did Caiaphas. They sacrifice the interests of the soul, for the sake of scrupulous adherence to what they deem the letter of the law. This was exactly the sin of the Priests and Pharisees. The law of God, and attachment to his prescribed ordinances, is their pretended motive, while love of personal influence or denominational ascendency is the real one. So it was with these crucifiers of the Savior. There may be a great difference in the degree in which those feelings

are exhibited, but let those who cherish them, study the case, and see if they can find any difference in kind. We can find none. Whoever puts his rank and station, and the interests of that division of the church to which he belongs, on which perhaps his rank and station depend, in competition with the progress of real, heart-felt, genuine piety in the world, will find, if he is honest, that the spirit of the Jewish Sanhedrim is precisely his.

But now comes a new character still, upon this ever varying stage. At the door of the hall where this trial is going on, stands a man who is watching, with eager interest, every thing which takes place. He seems to be a stranger. He tries to affect unconcern, but he plainly is not one of the common bystanders there. Presently some one comes down to the door and procures admission for him, and he takes his place by the fire with the others who are waiting to see the end. He is accused several times, by persons who notice his appearance, of being one of the friends of the prisoner, but he is afraid to admit it. An hour ago he drew his sword in his master's defence,— now he dares not admit that he knows him. Perhaps he was afraid that Malchus would remember, against him, his wounded ear. He had in fact more reason to fear, than any other disciple; and, as human nature is, it is not surprising that he should be overcome by the greatness of the danger.

If this scene were fiction, one of its highest beauties would be the contrasts of character between Peter and John. A superficial observer, drawing from imagination, would have made Peter, in all respects, bold and undaunted; and in exhibiting John as mild and gentle, would have made him timid and yielding. But history in this case, as she is recording facts, is true to nature, and while she gives to Peter physical boldness and constitutional ardor, she gives the calm, steady, lofty moral courage to the gentle John At midnight, among lan-

terns and torches and weapons and an armed band, Peter rushes on with his sword; but when the hour of physical excitement has passed, he turns pale at the question of a maid-servant, and denies his Lord. John has no resistance to offer to a soldier; but amidst all his master's dangers, he keeps close to his side, his known and acknowledged friend; attending him faithfully on his trial, and doing all he can by his presence and sympathy to soothe his last moments upon the cross.

Reader, if you had been in Peter's case should you have denied your Master as he did? Were this question to be proposed to any assembly of Christians, and if an answer was to be immediately given, according to the spontaneous feelings of the heart, it would be perhaps one universal negative. You think that you yourself would certainly never have committed so great a sin; and still it is not at all improbable that you are cherishing a secret hope that your sins are forgiven, and are yet concealing it from others. You hope you are the Savior's friend, but you are afraid or ashamed to have it known. You wish to make secret peace; and are unwilling to repair openly, the injury which you have openly done.

Still, you will say perhaps, that, though this may be wrong, there is a great difference between such a concealment, and repeatedly and plainly denying the Savior in express assertions.

True. And so there is a great difference between the degree of danger which leads you to deny your master, and that which overwhelmed Peter. You are afraid of a taunt, or of some harmless sarcasm; scourging and crucifixion threatened him. You are afraid of the looks and words of a few of your own companions; he quailed before weapons of torture and death, in the hands of a ferocious soldiery; if you consider, therefore, the difference between the modes by which your practical denial of Christ, and his, are exhibited, you must

also consider the difference in the strength of the temptation by which you are respectively overcome. The sin is the same in its nature in both cases, and though yours is less conspicuous, it may be even more aggravated than his.

The sin of Peter, is, in all its essential characteristics, very often committed by those who profess to abhor it. Brought as we are, in such a world as this, into perpetual connexion with the influences of sin, we are very often thrown into circumstances where we think it most prudent, for a time, to conceal the flag under which we profess to sail. There is no great danger which we dread; but when we come into scenes where Jesus Christ is not honored, and where his principles are in disrepute, we quietly conceal our attachment to him, and while we perhaps say nothing that is false, we allow ourselves to pass for worldly men, by speaking in their tone, and displaying, so far as we can, their spirit. We are ashamed or afraid to avow our principles, and, consequently, we stand substantially where Peter did. There is in fact no essential difference between his case and ours. The circumstances are altered, but the spirit is the same.

But we must go on with our story. The Jews, too punctilious to go themselves into the judgment hall, waited in the street and sent their prisoner in. The conversation which ensued is one of the most striking examples which the Bible contains; — every incident being so true to nature, and every word so exactly in keeping with the character and circumstances of the individual who utters it. It was substantially as follows. While reviewing it, however, we must keep in mind the strongly marked characteristics of the three great parties in the transaction: Jesus the victim, patient, quiet and submissive, ready to bear and to suffer every thing; silent

under mere taunts, but ready to explain, when any one shall honestly ask for explanation. The crowd in the street, eager for his destruction, but without power to effect it unless they can obtain permission from the governor, before whose palace they have assembled; and the governor himself, caring nothing about the Jews or their pretended criminal; but unwilling either to put an innocent man to death, or to displease the people under his command, and standing especially in awe of anything which might hazard his political character in the estimation of the emperor at Rome. Agitated and distracted by the contradictory impulses of these feelings, he vacillates and wavers, and tries every way to escape the responsibility of a decision.

"What accusation do you bring against this man," was the first and most natural question. Pilate came out to ask it of those who had assembled at the door.

They answered that he was a malefactor. Perhaps they had not decided upon the precise charge which they should bring against him.

"Very well," was the reply, "take him and judge him according to your law."

"He deserves *death*, and that, it is not lawful for us to inflict," they replied. "We have therefore brought him to you."

A conversation now ensued, in which they brought out their charge, adapted to the feelings of the new judge. The old accusation was *blasphemy*. Now it is *treason*. Treason against the Roman government. This, too, when every Jew, from Galilee to Gaza, abhorred the Roman yoke, and would have almost deified any one who would have raised successfully the standard of rebellion. Every Roman tax-gatherer was hated, and every mark of their political subjection was odious in the extreme; and they had themselves actually tried in vain to lead Jesus to say something against the Roman

government, supposing that he would not dare to brave public opinion so far as to speak in its favor. In the face of all this, they come, heartless pretenders to an allegiance which they did not feel, to denounce him to their common enemy, for what they would, every man of them, have been glad to have had done. It was the basest of all charges ever brought against the victim of any oppression. They accuse him, before their common enemy, of being their own friend: for treason against Cæsar, would have been political attachment to them; so that if he had uttered sentiments hostile to the powerful foe, which had brought one common oppression over the land of their fathers, it would have been base treachery for *them* to have disclosed it.

But he had not. They took some of his metaphorical expressions, and perverted them to a meaning which they were never intended to convey; and endeavored from these to maintain their charge of treason against Cæsar.

The charge was well calculated to produce some effect. It evidently arrested the attention of the Roman, and he went into the hall, where Jesus stood waiting, to ask for his defence.

The manner in which he accosted him seems to imply that Pilate thought it probable that his prisoner was some insane or at least eccentric man, against whom his countrymen had been for some reason exasperated; for he does not put the charge of treason to him as an accusation against which he wished to hear his defence; "Art thou the king of the Jews?" said he; as if his object was, to put him off his guard, by saying nothing which implied reproach, but only endeavoring to draw him into conversation.

"Do you ask the question of your own accord?" was the Savior's reply, (We give the conversation in substance only,) "or is that the charge which they bring against me."

"Am I a Jew?" was the rejoinder. "What interest should I take in the affairs of your people? Your own countrymen have brought you here to me, as a criminal: what is it that you have done?"

"They accuse me then of trying to be a king. I have spoken sometimes of a *kingdom*, but it is not of this world. It is perfectly plain that I have aimed at no political power; If I had, I should never have yielded up myself to my enemies without a struggle. My friends would have fought for me if this had been the nature of my aim. No: the kingdom I have spoken of is not of this world."

"Are you a king then, in any sense?"

"Yes, I am. I came into the world to found a new moral kingdom here, by bearing witness to the truth."

"What is your truth?" asked the Roman; but apparently not waiting for a reply, he went out to the door again, and told the multitude there, that he found no fault in the man. He probably supposed that he was some ignorant and deluded, but harmless, enthusiast, whose case deserved no serious notice.

The priests, however, renewed their charges. They assured the governor that their prisoner was really a dangerous man, that he had been exciting sedition, and teaching the people treason against the Roman government, all over the land, from Galilee to Jerusalem.

The word Galilee suggested to the perplexed Roman a new way of extricating himself from the difficulty, for it was fast becoming quite a serious difficulty to him. His sense of justice would not allow him to condemn the man, but he could not resist the clamor which demanded his death. The word Galilee reminded him that he might throw off the responsibility of the decision upon Herod, who had jurisdiction over that province, and who was, at this time, accidentally at Jerusalem. He sent him therefore to Herod, his accusers following in the train.

Herod was glad to see them come, when he heard who it was they were bringing. He did not wish, like Pilate, honestly to examine the case, but hoped for amusement from his prisoner. Jesus perceived it at once; and though he frankly explained to Pilate his character and plans, to Herod's questions of curiosity and insult, he deigned no reply. The Priests and scribes accused him vehemently, but he was silent. They clothed him in a gorgeous robe, in ridicule of his supposed pretensions, and then sent him back to Pilate.

Under these circumstances, the Procurator was much perplexed to know what to do. Duty was on the one side, and strong inducement to do wrong on the other, and he wavered, and hesitated, and resisted, and inclined now to this side, and now to that, just as the human mind so often does, in circumstances substantially the same. Millions of men, who struggle ineffectually with temptation to do acknowledged wrong, may see their own story told, and almost their own hearts reflected in this scene.

His first plan was, to compromise the difficulty.

"You have brought me this man," said he, "as one that is exciting the people against my government. I have examined him, here before you, and cannot find any evidence of his guilt. I have sent him to Herod too, and he finds no more evidence than I. Now I am willing to inflict some moderate punishment upon him, but he has done nothing worthy of death."

This of course did not satisfy them. They were determined, if the most urgent demands on their part could prevent it, that he should not escape so.

Pilate then thought of another plan. It had been customary for him at their great festival, to release some public criminal as a favor to them. In a conquered country, the interests of the government are generally regarded as so distinct from those of the people, that even the punishment of criminals, especially those guilty of

political crimes, is regarded as in some sense, an injury to the community. A foreign power comes and establishes itself over them, and it is not surprising that even wholesome control should be unpopular, and that the pardon of a state criminal should be regarded as a boon from the authorities,— a suitable contribution from the government, to the means of rejoicing at a great public festival.

The Roman proposed, then, since they insisted that Jesus should be condemned to die, to consider him as thus condemned, and then to pardon him, as it was usual to pardon one on the occasion which had now arrived. He might have known that this would not succeed. The crowd were all ready with their reply. "Release Barabbas;" "Pardon Barabbas;" "Barabbas," came up from a hundred voices.

"What shall I do then with this Jesus."

"Crucify him;" "Crucify him."

"Why, what evil hath he done? He *is not* guilty."

"Crucify him;" "Crucify him;" was the universal reply.

The perplexed and distressed Procurator seems scarcely to have known what to do. The crowd must, by this time, have become very great, and was probably every moment increasing. Passions were rising,— violent gesticulations, and ferocious looks, spoke the intense excitement which prevailed,— and he must have seen that there was the most imminent danger of a riot, perhaps an insurrection, which would involve him in lasting difficulty, or might even ruin for ever his political hopes. He could allay the whole by giving up the defenceless and innocent object of their fury. But when he looked upon him, patient, mild, submissive, waiting in silence to learn what was to be his fate, he could not do it. He was a Roman, and he knew his duty.

It was very plain, however, from the course he had

taken thus far, what would be the ultimate decision. He began to yield at first, and when a man proposes terms with sin of any kind, it is not difficult to foresee which will conquer. Pilate concluded to go one step farther; to scourge the prisoner, in hopes, perhaps, that when they came to witness his sufferings under the lash, their hearts would relent, or at least that their anger would be satisfied. He gave him up to the soldiers therefore, and ordered him to be scourged.

Scourging! How few of those who have read this story have any idea what a military scourging is. I might give a description from the narratives of witnesses, for the horrid suffering is still inflicted as a supposed essential part of military discipline. But it must not be done; I could not introduce to my readers, by distinct description, a hardy soldier, writhing and shrieking under such an infliction, without passing those limits in the detail of physical suffering, beyond which, such a work as this ought not to go. How Jesus bore it, we are not told. Pilate hoped it would satisfy his murderers. It would have satisfied any common murderers.

The scourging finished,—the bleeding sufferer was retained some time, by the soldiers, for their amusement. A larger number, perhaps nearly the whole garrison of Fort Antonia, were called to enjoy the sport. They crowned him with thorns, and gave him a reed for a sceptre, and then with the gorgeous robe which Herod had found for him, they held him up as an object of universal derision.

Pilate at length came forth again, to make a last effort to save the prisoner.

"Here," said he, "I have brought him forth again, to tell you once more, that *he is not guilty*. Behold the man," said he, as he pointed to the prisoner, covered with marks of the sufferings and indignities he had borne. The reed was in his hands, the purple robe around him,

and the thorns were in his bleeding temples. No wonder Pilate thought his enemies would have been moved.

"Crucify him," "Crucify him;" was the universal reply.

"You must take him then and crucify him yourselves, for I cannot find any fault in him. He has not been guilty of treason."

But why go on to detail the faltering, failing efforts, which the Roman officer made to save his prisoner. He had begun to yield, and though he continued to dispute the ground, at every step he gave way more and more, until, finding that riot and tumult were inevitable, and when it was pretty distinctly intimated that he might be denounced at Rome, as a traitor himself, if he allowed this supposed traitor to go free, he finally yielded. Before giving, however, the orders for his crucifixion, he came out before the multitude, and in the most solemn manner assured them, that the man was innocent, and that if they crucified him, they must answer for his blood.

"His blood be on us, and on our children;" was the awful reply.

Very few men ever think of comparing themselves with Pontius Pilate, or with the soldiers who executed his orders; when perhaps there are not any where in the Bible, delineations of character which might be more universally appropriated than these. Neither of them had any special hatred for the Savior. Pilate would have done his duty if he could have done it by any common sacrifice; but like multitudes, probably, who will read this examination of his character, he was not willing to make the sacrifice which was necessary, in taking the right side. The reader fluctuates, perhaps, just as he did, between conscience and temptation, yielding more and more to sin, and finding the struggle more

hopeless the longer it is continued. A religious book, an afflictive or a warning providence, or an hour of solitude, quickens conscience, and renews the combat; but the world comes in with its clamors, and, after a feeble resistance, he gives way again,— Pilate exactly, in every thing but the mere form in which the question of duty comes before him.

And the Roman soldiers too; they would have said if they had been charged with doing wrong, that they were soldiers, and must do as they were ordered. They executed Christ as they would have executed any other man at their centurion's command. Such work was their business, and the part they performed in the sad tragedy was, as the phrase is at the present day, *in the way of business;* they felt, probably, no responsibility. The excuse was, to say the least, as good then as it is now, and it will be allowed as much weight at the judgment day, in the case of the ignorant and degraded soldier, as in that of the enlightened and cultivated member of a christian community. In other words, it is no excuse for either. The bookseller who has circulated a pernicious book, the lawyer who has fomented the quarrels which he ought to have healed, the merchant who has distributed over the community the temptations to vice or the means of gratifying unholy passions, and the soldiers who insulted and tortured their victim in obedience to their commanders, will all find at last, that the customs or regulations of business among men, will never justify doing what conscience declares to be wrong.

Such is the marked and striking variety of character which is exhibited in this extraordinary scene. We have the soldiers and the bystanders, like the mass of mankind, unconcerned and reckless, caring little about right and wrong, and controlled in their conduct by the accidental influence of circumstances,— neither fearing

God, nor regarding duty; and we have Pilate, doubting and hesitating in the struggle against sin,—conscience awake, and yet temptation powerful, and the contest ending, as such contests usually do, in the victory of sin. They are fair examples of the two great forms of open wickedness; hardened reprobates sinning without compunction, and the wavering and miserable soul doing wrong in spite of it. It is hard to tell which God regards as most guilty. We have hypocrisy, also, in its two leading forms; Judas a hypocrite for money, and the Priests, hypocrites for place and power. To complete the collection, we have piety in its two leading forms; the wandering, sinning, and broken-hearted Peter; and Mary and John, firm in their duty, and unwavering in their affection, to the last; sharing the opprobrium and the danger of their Master, and keeping closely at his side; giving him all that human sympathy can give, and receiving his dying charge.

It is a very common impression that the populace, generally, were against the Savior, at this time; but the narrative does not seem to countenance this idea. The Priests were against him, and they seem to have been the chief, if not the only agents. They contrived their plans secretly, in order to get him apprehended, and to procure sentence against him, by the Roman governor, before there should be any opportunity for a rescue by the people; after this, they knew he would be secure; and now when he was led away, under Roman authority, to execution, they seem not to have feared any interruption. A great company of friends did, however, follow him, lamenting his cruel fate. He once turned to address them on his way, asking them to weep not for him, but for themselves and their children.

They came to the place of execution, and painful as it is, we must dwell a few moments upon the scene that

was presented there. He was to be crucified; and crucifixion is perhaps the most ingenious and the most perfect invention for mingling torture and death which was ever contrived. It is the very masterpiece of cruelty. Life is to be destroyed; but in this way of destroying it, it is arranged with savage ingenuity that no vital part shall be touched: the torturer goes to the very extremities,— to the hands and to the feet, and fixes his rough and rusty iron among the nerves and tendons there; and the poor sufferer hangs in a position which admits of no change and no rest, until burning and torturing inflammation can work its way slowly to the seat of life, and extinguish it by the simple power of suffering.

They laid the Savior down upon the cross, and extended his arms; a soldier on each side, holds the hand down in its assigned position, and then presses the point of his iron spike upon the proper place in the palm. He raises his hammer,— the patient sufferer waiting calmly for the blow;—

But we must stop; — we are going beyond those limits in the detail of physical suffering, which we have said a writer in such a work as this, should not pass over. We leave the rest, and the reader must conceive if he can, of the first sharp piercing agony, and the excruciating pains then shooting through the frame;— the rising inflammation, and the intolerable thirst, which goads a wounded man almost to desperation, and brings up from a field of battle, a few hours after the contest, one universal cry for water, from the thousands who lie wounded and dying. As the Savior hangs, too, by such a suspension, hour after hour, we must remember that *he had been scourged.* Perhaps this was in mercy, however. He died sooner than the malefactors.

But it is too awful a scene to dwell upon. We may read the narrative in the gospels, without much feeling, because we have long been familiar with the words,

and they cease to affect us. But if the imagination really enters into the scene, she recoils, awed and terrified with the contemplation of such sufferings. Very few men would have nerve enough to witness what the Redeemer was willing to endure.

Life was slow in relinquishing its hold, attacked thus, as it was, in the remote extremities. It sunk at last, however, under the power of protracted pain. The sufferer ceased to speak; his head dropped upon his breast; and as they looked up to his face from below, the rigid fixedness of feature, and the half closed and glassy eye told them that all was over.

In crucifixion, ingenious and savage cruelty maintains her ground to the very last; for when the executioner gets tired of waiting for the miserable sufferer to die, and time compels him to do something to accelerate the work, he has not the mercy to destroy the sad remnant of vitality at a blow. He keeps, still, as far as possible away from the seat of life, and by new violence inflicted on the limbs, endeavors simply to send a new pang, as a reinforcement to the assailant, in the protracted contest between life and suffering. It is the very object and aim of crucifixion to kill by pain, and with savage consistency they will employ no other agent to speed the work. Accordingly when, at sunset, the soldiers came to the place of execution to see how the fatal process was going on, they broke the malefactors' legs to quicken their dying struggles.

"*He* is dead already," said they, when they came to the Savior's cross, and looked at the body hanging passive and lifeless upon it, and one of them thrust his long iron-pointed spear up into his side, to prove that there was no sense or feeling there.

The ferocious executioners then went away and left the disciples to take the body gently down, and bear it

away to the tomb. As they carried it to what they supposed would be its long home, the limbs hung relaxed and passive; the tongue, to whose words of kindness and instruction they had so often listened, was silent; the eye fixed,—the cheek pale,—the hand cold. The soldiers had done their work effectually; and though the disciples could not have noticed these proofs that their Master had really gone, without tears, they must still have rejoiced that the poor sufferer's agonies were over.

As to themselves, all their hopes were blasted, and all their plans destroyed. They had firmly believed that their Master was to have been the Savior of his nation; instead of that, he had been himself destroyed. The day before, every thing had looked bright and promising in their prospects; but this sudden storm had come on, and in twenty-four hours, it had swept every thing away. They placed the body in the tomb, and, disappointed, broken-hearted, and overwhelmed with sorrow, they went to their homes. They knew nothing about the design and nature of these sufferings,—and we know, after all, but little; but who can be so insensible as not to see, that this transaction, exhibiting on so conspicuous a stage all the forms and degrees both of holiness and sin, and especially when seen in the light in which the sacred writers subsequently exhibited it, goes very far towards making the same moral impression, as would be made by the just punishment of sin. Who can read the story, without loving purity and holiness, and abhorring and dreading guilt.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTING COMMAND,

OR THE MEANS OF SPREADING THE GOSPEL.

"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

WERE we to follow inclination, we should not pass over those most interesting events, which occurred during the interval between the Savior's death and ascension. But it is not the design of this work, as the reader will have already perceived, to give a connected and continuous history of Jesus Christ, but to bring forward the leading principles of religious truth, as they are naturally connected with the various points of this history. Fidelity to our plan therefore seems to require, that after having considered the sufferings which our Savior endured for us, we should pass on to the consideration of the great work which he wishes us now to do for him. He assigned this work to his disciples by his last words.

The objects and the pursuits of human life are entirely changed, by the view which the gospel takes of the human condition and character. Without the light which Christianity sheds upon it, it is a dull and wearisome path, a routine of tiresome duties, or heartless pleasures. Every one will admit that it has been so with him, in respect to the past, though his future way seems gilded with new promises of enjoyment. These however will certainly fade away when he approaches them, as all the rest have done.

The mass of mankind, never see this. They know, it is true, that they have never been contented and happy, and are not now; but just before them, in the voyage of life, they see a bright spot upon the waters, which they expect soon to reach, and where their bark will

float, they think, in a golden sea of light and glory. That spot has been just so far before them, and has looked just as bright and alluring for years,—and as they have approached it, the splendid reflection has fled, and the waters have returned to darkness and gloom, before the keel of their bark could plough them. Still they have not discovered this illusion, but they give themselves up to its influence, with their whole souls, and press forward as eagerly to the spot of imagined happiness, as if it had just this moment burst upon their view.

The more thinking and serious, however, see this, and feel it deeply. It seems to them discouraging to toil on in duties, which return every day the same, and the performance of which leaves behind no permanent effects; or to seek for pleasures, which the experience of years has proved can seldom be attained, and which, when they are attained, do not satisfy. These feelings have oppressed many a sensitive and reflecting spirit, as it has looked forward to the years of life that remain, and thought how soon they would be gone, and has asked with a desponding sigh, "What have I to live for?"

The true followers of Jesus Christ are raised at once above the vacuity and inanity which characterize a life spent without God. Their Master did not leave the world, without giving them something to do. Something, at once pleasant, and useful, and ennobling. It is pleasant, because it interests all the feelings of the heart, and carries the soul on to peaceful, but rich enjoyments, of the very highest character. It is useful; it seeks directly the highest good, aiming at happiness present and future, and attaching its own proper share of importance to every means of attaining it. It is ennobling; for it sinks all the base passions of selfishness and sin, it breaks over the barriers and limits of time and sense, and expands the views and widens the field of effort and by

linking man with God, in one great and common enterprise, it raises him almost out of the sphere of human action, and gives him an employment eternal in duration, and unbounded in the wide-spread extension of its aims.

The work which Christ has given us to do, is the promotion of his kingdom here, and it is the work of all. If there is anything clearly asserted in the New Testament, it is that the followers of the Savior are not their own, but his; that they are bought with a price, and are bound to be devoted to their Maker's service. The great work too, which, in his service, they are called upon to perform, is establishing and spreading the reign of holiness in this world; and it is of such fundamental importance that every Christian should understand clearly his duty in this respect, that a chapter ought to be devoted to it; and as it is a subject which relates exclusively to personal duty, I shall adopt the form of direct address to my reader.

When you give yourself up to the service of Jesus Christ, then, consider how much is meant by it. It involves, among other things which have already been considered, devoting yourself to his work. To bring men to repentance and holiness was the work of his life; if you follow him, then, it must be yours. This point, however, was considered more fully, in a preceding chapter. Our object is now, not to enforce the duty, but to show rather, by what means it is to be performed. These we shall consider in order.

I. — A HOLY LIFE.

The most direct and powerful means of promoting the Savior's kingdom, is the vigorous cultivation of your own growth in grace. There is a great tendency among Christians, to look too much away from themselves, and think that they are to do good to their fellow men, by bustling efforts, bearing directly upon them, without the

light of a high and consistent, and unsullied example of holiness. "Ye are the salt of the earth," said our Savior, and the very expressive metaphor seems to imply that Christianity is to influence mankind, not so much by its outward and open triumphs in the world, as by the silent and unseen, and yet most powerful operation of its principles, in the hearts and lives of its professors. The thousands of individual Christians are surrounded, each in his own little sphere, with some, upon whom they exert a constant influence. The aggregate of this influence, is immense. Each individual, however, is responsible only for his own comparatively minute and separate share; but success in securing it, in every part, and consequently in the whole, depends on personal Christian character.

To show this, let us consider the amount of influence of two distinct kinds, which may be exerted by a particular church. It consists, we will suppose, of a hundred members; and in the daily business and pursuits of life, they are connected, probably, more or less directly, with two thousand persons. That is, there are two thousand persons, at least, who are acquainted with some one or more of them. One kind of influence then, exerted by these Christians, is, that of their private character and conduct, and the spirit manifested in their dealings as they affect these two thousand. Again, they are interested, we will suppose, in the spread of religion, and they contribute a considerable sum of money, to circulate bibles or tracts, or to support missionaries in foreign lands. Now the point is, that the former, viz. the private influence, exerted over those with whom they come into immediate connexion, is far more important than the other. It is this kind of influence, which is more frequently spoken of in the New Testament than the other; and if the church felt the importance, and universally acted accordingly, the gospel would make far more rapid progress in the

world, than it now does. The reader will see in the sequel, that I do not mean to undervalue the second mode of promoting Christ's kingdom. It should have its proper place; but the first and great duty of every Christian, is to see that his own heart is right, and that the light of the glory of God, shines in all his private conduct.

And yet this is very often forgotten. The heart, deceitful and hard towards God, loves to forget it. We seek moral renewal for ourselves, and we feel, at first, a strong interest in our Maker's service; but the world comes in again, and gets the victory; and since we do not like to renew the painful struggle necessary to overthrow it once more, we leave ourselves, and endeavor to quiet conscience by activity in our efforts to save others from their sins. Our pride is gratified by the thought, that we stand on safer and better ground than those for whom we labor, and many other worldly feelings may be gratified, in devising, and executing our plans. In the meantime, our own hearts remain cold and dead; our petitions become feeble, our prayers formal; desires for real spiritual blessings for our own souls are gone, and we work industriously, with the pretence of endeavoring to procure for others, what we do not really desire for ourselves.

This must not be so, if we wish to do any good to the cause of Christ. We must look within, and seek first to eradicate our own sins, and have our own hearts right. We should pray for spiritual blessings for ourselves, and see that we do it sincerely. Many and many a night when the Christian kneels for his evening prayers, he cannot honestly ask God to come and be with him. The world has full possession; and if he prays in words, that God would come and break its chains, it is with a secret wish that he may not be heard. If we examine ourselves with careful scrutiny, we shall often find that this is really the case. The Christian, therefore, who wishes

Watching one's self. Common way of evading duty.

to be at his post, and to act efficiently for his Master, should pray for himself, and see that he can pray honestly.

Again, he should *watch himself.* We are all far more willing to watch one another, than to watch ourselves. It is easier, and more pleasant to see the faults of others, than our own. We like to think of the obstinacy, and ingratitude, and folly of those that are entirely without God in the world, far better than to see the same qualities in ourselves, who profess to have tasted of the happiness of piety and then have almost thrown the cup aside. Now there is, unquestionably, such a fault as turning our thoughts too exclusively to ourselves. Many persons err in this way, and to them, advice contrary to this, should be given. But such cases are rare. The mass of Christians, especially in this busy age, are far more inclined to be watchful over all their neighbors, than over themselves, and especially to see the hardness of heart, and the base ingratitude exhibited by sinners, while they entirely overlook their own.

Once more; we should *labor* for *our own* spiritual good. In religious action, the natural law in respect to selfishness seems to be reversed. We are far more ready to toil for others, than for ourselves; we had rather that they would repent, than that we should grow in grace;—we prefer buying and distributing a dozen tracts for the unregenerate, to reading attentively and prayerfully a treatise designed to promote our own progress in holiness.

This is not surprising, though it is very wrong. Unhappily for us, moral renovation leaves sin in our hearts, wounded, indeed, but very imperfectly subdued; and this is one of the forms, which, for ever deceitful, it continually assumes; but it must not be so. The best way to *spread* religion, is to *exemplify* it. A pure church is the most powerful army; the Christian armor consists of the

Christian graces, and it is with these, that victories really valuable, are alone to be won.

But it is not my intention here, to point out the means of growing in grace, but only to bring to view the importance of a high standard of personal holiness among believers, as a means of spreading the religion of the Savior. There is a great tendency to look with too exclusive an interest at the public movements of the church in its efforts to extend its boundaries, while the far more powerful influences which might be exerted by piety and holiness within, are comparatively neglected. The interest felt, however, in the public movements of the church, is not yet half what it ought to be. I do not wish to depress the one, but to raise the other. In fact they generally go hand in hand. Right efforts, made in the right spirit, are among the very best means of promoting piety and spiritual progress, in the individual who makes them; there is a sort of reflex action that brings to his own heart, the blessings which he seeks to bring down upon others. But to accomplish this object, they must be *right efforts*, made in the right spirit: and here is the danger.

In fact there is no question that a man may be led to the most vigorous efforts to promote the cause of religion from motives which are altogether distinct from those which the Savior requires. Self interest, party spirit, love of honor, spiritual pride, and a thousand other motives animate a vast proportion of the zeal which is professedly expended in the cause of Christ. One man, a professor of religion, and in fact a sincere Christian, is very much engaged in promoting the building of a church. The cause of Christ, he thinks, requires it. So it does, and so will the value of his property be increased by its being placed in its vicinity: and it will require a great deal of careful self-examination, for him to ascertain in precisely what proportion these two mo-

tives act upon him. In fact, if a destroying angel were commissioned to pass over our land, and apply the torch to every church which pride, or interest, or love of honor had erected, and leave those only which are the monuments of sincere and honest love to the Savior, we fear that the smoke of a great many conflagrations would ascend.

In the same manner, a minister will be active and ardent in his efforts to awaken religious interest among his people; or, an author may write a book, ostensibly to give religious instruction. Now they both may be led forward in their work by a desire to do good; but it must not be forgotten that the very same success which accomplishes good for the cause, brings honor to the laborer; and many an enterprising and zealous workman will find, if he looks honestly at his heart, that the worldly feeling has far more than its fair share in the work.

It is the same with all the open and active means of endeavoring to promote the Savior's cause. There is so much mingling of motives in them, that it is difficult to tell, in many cases, whether the natural or the renewed feelings are most cultivated by such efforts. If these things are done in the right spirit, they cultivate that spirit;— and on the other hand, the feelings which prompt them are strengthened, if they are wrong. Bad passions as well as good, thrive under the influence of indulgence, and consequently the very same act, such as contributing money for any religious or charitable purpose, may be the means of awakening and cherishing in the heart of the Christian who makes it, love to God, and a warm desire for the salvation of men. It may wean him from the world, and link him to his Savior by a bond closer than before. On the other hand, it may give the reins to selfishness and passion, and banish spiritual peace and joy, and bring back the soul very far in its sad return to the dominion of sin.

Influence of the heart greater than that of the conduct.

It is therefore unsafe to depend, as too many do, on mere Christian action, for their growth in grace. It is sometimes unquestionably wise, to turn the thoughts of some dejected desponding Christian away from himself, in the hope that he may find cheerfulness and enjoyment in doing work for his Master. It is, in many cases, the very best advice which can be given. Still those instances, though many in the aggregate, are individually rare. In all ordinary cases, the great danger is the other way,— of going out of ourselves, and seeking to win God's favor by the bustle of what we call Christian action, while the passions of the heart remain unsubdued, and its recesses of hidden guilt, unexplored. It is a great deal easier, with hearts such as ours, to give money, or to erect a church, or to exhort in a religious assembly, or to write good advice for others, than to come and humble our own selves, and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.

The advantage of making more direct and special efforts to induce Christians to cultivate the right spirit of piety, than to induce them to go forward in Christian action, is manifest, from the consideration, that warm piety in the heart will almost spontaneously go forth into Christian action, whether you urge it on, or not: but the most uninterrupted and energetic Christian action will not necessarily produce the right state of heart. It may only foster and strengthen the bad principles of action from which it springs. Besides, the light of a pure and honest Christian character must of itself do good among men. It exerts an influence which they cannot but feel, and it is an influence, far more powerful than any other. Suppose we could station in any community in our country, a little band of *perfect Christians*, and leave them there, merely as specimens of the practical effects of Christianity. Connect them by the ordinary pursuits of business, with the mass of society, but

Holy example. Unholy example. The latter common.

cut them off, if you please, from all opportunity to make direct efforts to inculcate the principles of religion upon others. What an effect their simple presence would produce! Pure, holy, harmless and undefiled, weaned entirely from this world, and living entirely for another. Hearts warm with love to God, and ardent affection for one another, and untiring benevolence towards all around them; selfishness gone,— pride, censoriousness, resentment, all gone; and instead of the base passions of human nature, the whole soul filled with the noble and generous and exalted sentiments which Christianity tends to inspire. What an influence would be exerted by such a church, even if they were deprived of all those means of influence on which we ordinarily depend; and how different would it be in its nature, from that which is now too often exerted, in the towns and villages of our land, by those who have in charge the cause of the Savior there. The minister, cold and heartless,— close and selfish in his dealings during the week;— and then preaching, on the Sabbath, in the performance of a dull routine of duty, or to gratify the vanity of rhetorical or theological display;— the father worldly and selfish,— devoted, with his whole soul, to the work of making a fortune,— and now and then adding his name to a subscription, to keep up his credit as a benevolent man, or perhaps to get rid of unpleasant importunity;— and a mother, scolding and fretting among her children and domestics all the morning, and then decking her face in assumed and heartless smiles, or in an expression of affected solemnity, to go to a religious or charitable meeting in the afternoon. My description may seem unnecessarily severe: I hope it is so. At all events, one thing is certain, that Christians cannot hope that God will bless them, and prosper his cause in their hands, unless their *hearts* are right, and their efforts in his service are made from honest desires to promote

their Savior's cause. And this will not be the case, unless the spirit of religion, which is the spirit of peace, love and joy, reign habitually and incessantly at home, as well as abroad, — in retirement as well as in public: and if it really exists, it will show itself as certainly in the tone and manner with which we speak to our children, or bear the little trials of every day life, as in the most public acts performed in the face of the world.

If then, you wish, Christian, to do any thing effectual for the Savior, look within: labor first and most constantly with your own heart, so that the light of pure religion may beam in beauty and gentleness there. The world around, will see and feel its moral power. Many will be led by it, to the fountain which has purified you; they will follow your example, they will imbibe your spirit; and thus, while coming nearer and nearer to the Savior yourself, you will in the most effectual manner extend his kingdom.

II. — PERSONAL INFLUENCE.

Aim at acquiring as strong a personal influence as possible over others. We put this next to the work of securing your own progress in holiness, because we really believe it stands next. The man whose own heart is right towards God, and who has a strong influence over others, must inevitably do a great deal towards promoting the Savior's cause. He may in many cases mistake; he may work to disadvantage; but he has the essentials, and to a great extent he must succeed. But let us explain what we mean by personal influence.

Here are two Christians equally devoted to their Master's cause. One, however, feels that next to his responsibility for his own personal character, his highest trust is his direct influence over others. This influence he will steadily endeavor both to preserve and to increase. In all his intercourse with others, he endeavors to ac-

The contrast. Repulsive piety. Its bad influence.

quire their good will. To find his way to their hearts, his benevolence is active, practical, operating at all times, and diffusing enjoyment all around him. He has regard for the rights and for the feelings of others, as well as for his own. He sympathizes with the difficulties and trials of those who are connected with him; and thus, independently of the light which his character sheds around him, he is the object of strong personal regard.

The other is a very different man. He cultivates the spirit of piety, and bewails his sins before God. He is ready to make even great sacrifice to do good, whenever the opportunity presents: but in all the thousand little connexions which bind him to society, he seems morose and stern. The ordinary kindnesses and courtesies of life, he never exhibits. He reserves his charity for masses of men, and his benevolence for great occasions. In all the ordinary dealings, in which he becomes connected from day to day with his fellows, he is harsh and unconciliating; firm in the defence of all his rights, and inflexible in resisting every injury. He means to do what is right; but on the line which his eye marks out as the line of rectitude, he stands firm and perpendicular. He ought to stand thus on the line of rectitude in respect to moral principle, but not on that of justice, in regard to his own interests. He never sympathizes with those who are dependant upon him. They find that he does not think of their temptations, or feel for the trials they have to bear. If they are sick, he relieves their wants perhaps, with cold propriety, but gives no evidence of compassion, or of real good will.

Now with the same degree of piety, if it is possible for the piety to be the same in two such cases, and with the same degree of wealth, and with the same influence of standing, how different will be the amount of service which these two individuals can render to their Master. The one is connected, by the closest ties, to many human

hearts; and his sentiments, his feelings, his spirit are insensibly and continually adopted by all around him. His light shines and allures. The other, not only can do no good, but he is constantly but insensibly doing harm. The world around consider his character as illustrating the natural tendencies of religion. Many cases have occurred, where a Christian of wealth and public influence has had such a character that a whole community has been seared in conscience, and alienated from the truth, by the associations which such a spectacle constantly before their eyes has led them to form. They would have disliked the purity and spirituality of religion without this, but they are led by it to dislike it still more. They are driven farther and farther away from God, by means of the influence of one of his friends.

Such characters, too, when once formed, seem to be incurable; for as every mad projector defends himself against the most convincing proofs of the wildness and impracticability of his schemes, by recollecting the opposition and incredulity which Columbus had to contend with, so do these Christians consider every difficulty they incur, and every feeling of opposition which they awaken in others, as proofs of their fidelity in the cause of their Master. "He that lives godly, will suffer persecution," says the apostle; but they read it the other way. All that suffer persecution must certainly be godly. Not very sound logic, the impartial reader will say: but any logic is sound enough to convince, when it is offered by interest or pride.

It is the duty then of every individual, who wishes to obey the Savior's dying command, and in obedience to it, to assist his Master in spreading the reign of piety among men, to take care of his personal influence.

A very large number of the readers of this work will however, in all probability, attempt to place themselves out of the reach of all these remarks, by saying to them-

Supposed want of influence. Extent and power of influence.

selves; "This is all very true, but it does not apply to me. I have no influence, and from the very circumstances in which Providence has placed me, I cannot have any."

While such readers have been perusing the preceding paragraphs, their thoughts have been fixed upon some influential individuals whom they could call to mind, and they have considered these remarks as applicable only to them, or to persons placed, like them, in stations of trust and responsibility in the service of God. Perhaps some one who reads this, may *wish* he could apply the remarks to himself. Sometimes, perhaps, in your hour of devotion, when your heart is warmed by reflecting what the Savior has done for you, you sigh to reflect how little you can do in return. You wish you had some public or general influence which you might devote to the cause of the Savior. But you are alone; your sphere of duty is limited to the little spot in which you move from day to day, with very little influence over other minds, so that even when you wish to do good, it seems scarcely in your power.

This feeling is one which very extensively prevails; but it is founded upon an entire mistake in regard to the nature of the influence which may be made most valuable for the purpose of promoting the Savior's cause. You think you have no influence. You have a very powerful influence. It is not extensive, but it is powerful, and this distinction you overlook. Let us consider it a little.

The chief magistrate of a populous city has an extensive influence. It reaches a great many minds. His plans and his measures promote or injure the interests of thousands. They are discussed, and approved or condemned, in many a little group, and thus, out of all the multitudes around him, there are very few who do not know his name, at least, if they do not hear of his doings

The influence of what passes in that one man's mind, extends, in this way, to tens of thousands. But after all, his official influence is not very powerful in any individual case. In the aggregate, it is very powerful,—but it is an aggregate made up of very small items. Select from among the multitudes with whom he is daily thrown into connexion, the one to whom he is bound most closely, —over whom he has the greatest ascendency; and how great an ascendency is it? Why, it is a tie of business. It is the influence of a slight interest in common, and the chain will remain just so long as the business and the common interest retain their hold. The power of heart over heart, in such a case, is very small. The man, from the eminence on which he is placed, holds a slight control, a feeble influence, over many thousands We gaze at the greatness of it, in amount, and forget how feeble it is in detail. The very child, returning from school with the companion of his studies and his plays, holds an ascendency and a control over *the heart*, to a degree which the statesman or the magistrate never obtains. Now it is influence over the heart, which is to be made effectual in making friends for the Savior.

Suppose that two obscure and solitary individuals live together in a retired dwelling among the mountains. Their pursuits, their interests, their joys and sorrows are common. If one is cheerful and happy, the light of her smile is reflected upon the countenance of the other. If one is gloomy, or impatient, or sad, the sympathy which years have cherished, transfers the emotion to the bosom of the other. However dissimilar in disposition and character they may have been in youth, every difference is gradually diminished or destroyed. They come to be interested in the same pursuits, to fear the same evils, and to have every wish and every emotion common. This process of assimilation goes on till the last,— and when one of them at length lies down in the

Powerful but not extensive. The child and his little brother.

grave, the other is left to mourn the loss, with a feeling of irretrievable bereavement, to which human life can hardly afford a parallel.

This, now, is a powerful influence;— but it is not an extensive one. The influence of each could extend only to the other. The world around was nothing to them. And what is peculiar in this case is, that the greatness of the ascendency would depend, most of all, upon the very fact that the rest of mankind were removed beyond their reach. The fact that they were nothing to all the world, was the very reason why they were so much to one another. And it is so with us all. The more a man's influence is extended and diffused, the more is it ordinarily weakened, in its bearing upon individuals. The public officer, who reaches a hundred thousand minds, reaches them all feebly; and if you wish to find an example of the highest power exerted by one heart over another, you must seek it in the case of some one secluded from the world, and engaged in a round of duties, which bring him into contact with but few.

We may go farther than this, and say that there is scarcely an example of influence to be found, so powerful as that exerted by a little child just old enough to talk, over his little brother or sister a year or two younger than itself. He is in all things its leader and guide and oracle: with perhaps more power over its heart, than the world exhibits in any other case. The little learner follows and imitates his superior, in almost every thing. He goes wherever his companion leads,—and mimics all his actions,— and repeats, in his imperfect and broken articulation, all his words; and he is thus led forward to almost all his knowledge, and guided, in almost the whole formation of his character, by a child, only a little older than himself, and who is almost entirely unconscious of the influence he is thus exerting over an immortal mind

None too young to do good. Influence over brothers and sisters.

Such is the distinction between the extent, and the individual power of influence, and it does not require much reasoning to show which is most efficient as a means of promoting the salvation of souls. Piety is a feeling of the heart, and he who would promote it, must gain access to the heart. Consequently, the more direct the access, in the individual case, the greater is the prospect of success. A Christian laborer who is employed day after day by an irreligious man, has a far greater influence over him in a religious point of view, than the chief magistrate of the country can have. The laborer *must* have a great influence, in the formation of the religious character of his employer. If he is gentle and benevolent, and of unbending integrity and faithfulness, and if it appears that these traits of character spring from his Christian principle, the example thus set, will speak with an eloquence which words can seldom equal.

Perhaps this chapter is read by some one who has been accustomed to consider himself too young to do any good. You look around you, and see others enjoying opportunities of making direct efforts in the Savior's cause, and you think that if you could enjoy such a privilege, you would highly prize it. "Had I but a class in a sabbath school," you say, "how happy should I be, to endeavor to lead my pupils to the Savior."

You have not, indeed, a class in the sabbath school, but you have a little sister who is infinitely more under your influence, than any class of sabbath school children could be. You would see them only on the sabbath, and then but for an hour,—that too, in a crowded room, and among multitudes of strangers. Your brother or your sister, however, is with you every day. They come to you for assistance in a thousand difficulties, and for guidance in all their perplexities and cares. You can see them at all times; you can watch for opportunities to interest and attract them; you can help them to

forsake their sins, and to watch against temptation, by being at all times at hand; and above all, you can set them a constant example of the power of piety in making your own conduct what it ought to be, and your own heart peaceful and happy. Now the influence which you thus may possess, is altogether greater than you could have as a Sabbath school teacher. It is not so *extensive*, but it is more powerful in the individual case, and this is what is to be considered in judging of the opportunity you have to do good. Improve first, the little field which Providence has put so entirely into your hand, before you look forward to wider spheres.

There is not now a Christian on the globe who has not a very powerful influence of the kind which I have described, over one, two or more minds around him. Providence has placed us all, in connexion with our fellow beings, in such a way that we must exert a great influence upon the formation of their characters. The power which we thus hold, is far greater than we suppose, and until all within the circle of our acquaintance, however narrow that circle may be, are devoted and happy Christians, we must never say, and never feel that God has placed us in circumstances in which we have nothing to do for him.

It is on these principles, and for such purposes, that every individual Christian should labor to deepen and extend the influence in his hands; and it is by means of this, mainly, that he is to aim at building up the Savior's kingdom. If every one would be faithful, in the sphere in which Providence has placed him, the most astonishing effects would be immediately witnessed. Suppose every Christian were to come up at once to his duty as a follower of Christ, renounce the world entirely, search his heart, and cultivate, by every means in his power, his own spiritual progress,— and then

devote himself to the work of doing good in the narrow sphere of his own personal influence. There would be no splendid conquests achieved by any one; but by the united efforts of all, the work would go on with universal and almost inconceivable power. No one who knows the effect of holiness, when it appears in living and acting reality, in arresting attention and alarming the conscience, and in winning those who witness it, to penitence and faith, can doubt that each individual who should thus live might hope to be the means of bringing one, two, three, or four, every year, to the service of his Master: and to double or treble or quadruple the church in a year, would be progress which would soon change the face of things in such a world as this.

This is the way undoubtedly, that the principles of the gospel are ultimately to spread in the world: through the influence of the lives and efforts of private Christians. I speak of course, now, of those countries where Christianity has nominal possession. Private Christians look far too much away from themselves, to ministers and missionaries and bibles, and tracts, and imagine, that their business is merely to sustain the efforts made through these means. The far more valuable and powerful influences, which might be brought to bear upon a world lying in sin, from the light of religion in the hearts and lives of the great mass of believers, is lost sight of, and forgotten. But it is the *church* which is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is the great mass of disciples, which are the light of the world. Or rather it is they who ought to be; for a cold and worldly church, instead of being the pillar of the truth, is a millstone about its neck. Instead of casting around them the beams of heavenly light, its members shed abroad a darkness and a gloom which there is nothing to dispel.

Be careful then, not only to watch your own progress in piety, but to seek influence over your fellow men,—

the influence of heart over heart; and as far as you secure it, consecrate it all, honestly and sincerely to the cause of Christ.

III. — THE STUDY OF HUMAN NATURE.

Carefully study the powers and tendencies of the human soul, especially in its religious aspects, and be prepared to act intelligently in all that you do, in attempting to influence the heart. Most sad mistakes are made in this respect, by many religious men, who make efforts blindly, and without consideration, as if they imagined that religious truth was to accomplish its object by some mere mechanical power which it possesses, and as if it were of no consequence how it is applied.

In order to avoid this evil, it is necessary to consider, before we attempt to act upon any heart, what is the real effect which we wish to produce upon it, and then to adapt our means to the production of the effect. Many persons err most grossly in this respect. A teacher, for example, offers a prize to be awarded to the pupil who will commit to memory the greatest number of verses in the Bible. Emulation and jealous rivalry immediately take possession of the class, and reign supreme. But the verses are committed. The boys are indefatigable in their efforts, and if committing verses in the Bible was the ultimate object in view, and was to be accomplished at any sacrifice, the plan might be considered triumphantly successful. But committing passages of Scripture is not the end: it is only the means to an end. That end is the moral renewal of the heart, and it is defeated entirely by the mode taken to secure it.

Again, a religious man goes to converse with an unbeliever. I do not mean one who openly rejects Christianity as a whole, but who denies its fundamental truths, and lives in sin, sheltered by his unbelief. Now the proper object of a conversation with him is not to convince his

intellect, but to awaken his conscience. The difficulty is not with the understanding, but with the heart; and instead of wasting time in a fruitless attempt, by argument, to force upon his mind evidence which he is fully determined not to see, the true policy is to bring up, gently but clearly, questions of duty, based on what he admits to be true.

The Apostle Paul understood this principle, and practised upon it most perfectly. He adapted his discourses most adroitly to the condition and wants of his auditory. When he reasoned before Felix, it was upon righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; topics which his distinguished hearer could appreciate and understand. He based his addresses to the Jews on the sentiments of their own Scriptures. At Athens he endeavored to awaken the conscience by appealing to the few simple truths which his hearers there could not deny; and in his epistles to the Christian church, he went at once into all the sublime and mysterious truths which are revealed by the full light of the Christian dispensation. He studied human nature, and adapted what he had to say to the moral condition and wants of those whom he addressed; always making it his great object to awaken the slumbering conscience by the highest truths which his audience were prepared to understand.

In their efforts to promote the cause of religion, Christians often act as if they imagined that the great object was to bring truth before the mind, whereas the real difficulty is to gain influence for what is already there. The work which we have to do is to touch the heart, not to pour cold light upon the mind. Now to awaken warm feeling in the heart is unquestionably the province of the spirit of God. We cannot effect it alone, but we may adapt our efforts to this design, and at all events, we may so manage them, as not to thwart or oppose it. The reverse is often the fact. Many and many a

time is religious truth presented to a mind in such a way, and accompanied by such attending circumstances, as to destroy its effect. The various ways by which this is done cannot in such a chapter as this, be pointed out. What we wish is to put the Christian on his guard, that he may watch his plans and methods, and see that he does not defeat his own designs.

The proper guides, in such a study of the human heart, are the Bible and observation, not theoretical books. Perhaps a very large proportion of those who make human character a study at all, go first to theoretical writers for general views, and then just look into the conduct of men for the mere purpose of finding illustrations or proofs of them. They never go into the field as independent observers, ready to notice whatever they may see, and to leave it to tell its own plain story. Certain facts, which accord with their adopted theories, stand out in bold and prominent relief, while others are overlooked or forgotten: or if they are too conspicuous to be completely disregarded, they are warped and twisted to suit the false conceptions of the mind. Such a course besides fixing error, is an insurmountable barrier to progress. We notice and speculate upon human conduct just so far as the ground is covered by our theological or metaphysical opinions, and beyond that we do not go.

Books, and the opinions of great men on human nature, may perhaps be guides, but they never should be trammels and barriers. The field of observation is open before all; and Christianity, while it gives us the noblest work to do, gives us also the loftiest science to study. It puts, too, all the means and opportunities for observation fully before us, and says in spirit, "You have a world of mind around you, open to your influence and accessible to your observation. Make it your great study to understand it, and your great work to bring it home to God."

In regard, however, to the study of human nature, the difficulty with most persons is not that they do not make any observations of their own, but they do not connect the results they obtain by such observation, with their religious knowledge. Most men have in fact two entirely distinct and independent sets of ideas in regard to human character. One, obtained from metaphysical and theological speculations, and the other from their own intercourse with men in the common business and pursuits of life. These two classes of ideas too, they keep distinct and separate. On the sabbath, and when reading religious books, or thinking of the human soul in its theological aspects and relations, they take one view, and in the ordinary business of life they take another; and the knowledge of human nature, and the skill in influencing it which men so easily acquire in the latter case, very rarely extends itself to the former. It accordingly very often happens, that a man will display an unusual share of discrimination and delicacy of touch, so to speak, in operating on the minds around him in respect to the common affairs of the community, or to opinions and customs relating to ordinary life, while he is awkward, rough, and unsuccessful in every thing like the exertion of religious influence. Here, he seems to act on new and independent principles. He throws all the knowledge and skill which had proved itself so valuable in the other case, utterly aside, and proceeds, if indeed he proceeds at all, in a blind, mechanical, and formal manner, which is as unsuccessful in religion, as it would be in any thing else.

In truth, a great portion of the religious community would acknowledge, if they would be honest, that they do not consider the exertion of religious influence as coming under the ordinary rules which should regulate the action of mind upon mind. They justly attribute all hope of final success to a divine influence upon the heart;

but this, though it assigns a large part of the work to a higher power, does not at all alter the nature of the other part of it, which remains committed to us. We should always consider then, when making any efforts to bring a friend or a neighbor or a child to God, whether we should take a similar course, or at least one based on similar principles, or similar views of human nature, to accomplish any other change in his feelings or conduct.

Be careful also to make every experiment and effort, a means of increasing your stock of knowledge of the human mind, and of its tendencies and movements in respect to religious feeling. Watch the operation of causes and the nature of effects. Look into the Bible for a standard of religious duty, and for correct views of the nature and obligation of God's law; and then look into the wide field of action and character, which is developing itself all around you, and seek practical knowlege of man there. When you fail of producing a desired effect, investigate the cause of your failure; when causes from which you would have looked for one result, produce a different or a contrary one, examine the case and ascertain the difficulty. When success attends your efforts, analyze them with care, to discover what were the essential conditions of success. In this way, you cannot but make progress, and it is not at all necessary that acting thus faithfully and skilfully in doing your work, should lead you at all to undervalue the necessity of most efficient and continued help from above.

IV.—USE OF PROPERTY.

The Christian religion takes higher ground in respect to human duty than any pretended message from heaven ever dared to assume, and it makes claims, which for boldness and authority stand entirely without a parallel. Its theory is substantially this. That it is the great design of Jehovah to establish an universal kingdom of

benevolence, and consequent happiness:—that this kingdom has been, in this world, overturned and destroyed; and that all who wish its restoration are to come and *give themselves wholly* to the work of promoting it. He does not require men to devote a part of their time, and a part of their property to his purposes, leaving them to employ the rest for themselves. He claims the whole,— or rather he invites men to come and consecrate the whole to the work of co-operation with him. He allows no distinction between his property and ours. He makes no specification of the amount of time, or the extent of influence, which we should devote to his cause: but, on the other hand, he most distinctly says, that as he is devoting all his energies, and employing all his time, in the promotion of universal holiness and happiness, he expects all who wish to be considered on his side to come and devote all theirs to this work too.

The question is very often asked, "What proportion of a man's income ought to be devoted to charitable purposes?" But the question itself seems to rest on an entire misconception of the nature of the claim which God makes upon men. It may have either of two meanings. In the first place, the inquirer may mean to ask, what proportion of his means of doing good in this world, ought to be devoted to his Master's service, and what to his own:— or, on the other hand, it may mean this:— when all that a man has, is consecrated to God, what proportion of his means of influence should he employ himself, and what portion should he commit to others to employ, for it will be seen by a very slight examination, that when money is given for a charitable purpose, it is generally a method of sustaining others in the work of doing good. Now in the first of these two significations, the question is evidently based on erroneous views. God will admit of no such division of the heart, nor of the powers of his creatures. In the second, the

question must be unanswerable; that is, it can receive no general answer, for the courses to be taken in respect to it, are as various as the conditions and circumstances of men.

But let us analyze a little more accurately the real nature of doing good by means of money. It is called giving, but strictly speaking it is not giving. It is simply a combination of men in one place, to produce a certain moral effect in another; and money is made use of, as the mere instrument by which the object is accomplished. This we shall easily see, by looking at a particular case.

To make the reasoning the more simple, we will suppose a case which would never precisely occur, but we can easily apply the principles which it illustrates, to ordinary instances. We will suppose that, on some rude and inhospitable coast, remote from the fertile and wealthy regions of the civilized world, there is a community of hardy settlers, who are devoted and consistent Christians. They enjoy religious privileges themselves, and at length they form the wish to do something for the ignorant and vicious inhabitants of a small island, a few miles from their coast. They are themselves dependent upon their daily exertions, for their daily bread, and consequently, though they can all, besides discharging the duties they owe to their families, and to the poor around them, find an hour or two in each day, which they can devote to God's service in some foreign field, no one of them can gain time enough to go away from home, to visit the destitute islanders. Now there are evidently two ways by which they can surmount the difficulty. Any one of them can lay by the proceeds of his labor during those hours which are not required in the discharge of his duties at home, until he has accumulated stores sufficient to supply his family and himself during a visit to the island. The other plan is,

for all to combine, and send one of their number, by uniting their labors, during those extra hours, and thus finding support for the one who was absent. Let us suppose the latter plan to be adopted; and to make the case more distinct, we will imagine that one particular hour is assigned at which all who remain at home, shall be at work for the family of the one who was selected to go. When the hour arrives, the missionary is perhaps at the island, explaining to the inhabitants the nature of religion, and the claims of duty, and his friends and neighbors at home are each in his own little garden, laboring to provide food and clothing for their absent brother and for his lonely family. They are all at work together, and in one common cause. They are not, indeed, all in immediate connexion with the souls whose benefit is the object of the enterprise, but they who are at home, laboring to sustain the absent one, are as really and effectually operating upon the distant island, as he who has gone. They are all engaged in one common enterprise, for the promotion of God's cause, each doing his assigned part. Neither is giving to the other,— unless indeed he who goes can claim some gratitude from the rest, for having assumed the severer and more trying portion.

Now money is only a representative of the proceeds of labor, and if, instead of sending out to their missionary, the provision and clothing which he would need when engaged in his enterprise, his Christian friends at home should convert those provisions and clothing into the form of money, and send them to him in that form, it would not alter the case. They would still all be laborers in one common cause, different parts assigned to each, but all laboring together to spread the gospel, according to the command of their Master. Nor would the case be altered, if instead of working for this purpose at some specified time, each one was to labor

Its nature as a means of doing good.

when he pleased, in carrying forward this cause; nor is it essential that such labors should be kept distinct from the ordinary labors of the day. All these incidental circumstances may be almost endlessly varied, without at all altering the real nature of the transaction, considered as a combination among many Christians to effect a moral impression on human souls, each taking his own appropriate part, but all engaged together, and all responsible directly to God.

Such substantially, is, in all cases, the nature of the employment of money in spreading the gospel. One man by his own unaided efforts cannot give the Bible to a nation, or preach the gospel in a half civilized province, or upon an island of tawny savages, half round the globe. There must be a great combination to effect objects which are so great compared with the narrow limits of individual power. In this great combination, the various individuals have entirely different parts to perform, but all are really united in heart, and all their separate and distinct labors tend to the accomplishment of one common result. Money is made use of as the instrument, but it is only an instrument for bringing all these scattered labors to bear on the proper point. In the great union, too, no one is under obligation to the others. The account is between each individual and God.

How wonderful are the results secured by the contrivances and arts of life. A solitary widow, in her home among the distant forests, knits an hour or two at her lonely fireside, in order to contribute her little share to the spread of the gospel; her work tells on the minds of savages ten thousand miles from her humble dwelling. A farmer's children cultivate a little piece of ground in their father's garden, and change its products in the autumn for a dollar, It passes from their hands and they see it no more; but in a few months, the magic metal

comes out in the shape of a thousand pages of the word of God, and lives for half a century to tell its message to the benighted people of some foreign land. A timid and retiring and fearful daughter of Zion, wishes to do something for her Master, and she industriously plies her needle during the long winter evenings of a single season, and a few months afterwards, in consequence of it, a miserable and suffering child, whom she never saw, in a country which she has scarcely heard of, is told that he can be clothed and fed and taught, through the instrumentality of a love which has reached half round the globe to bring him relief from his misery.

It is important to be noticed here, too, that in one respect, the more remote from ourselves is the place where we can make any moral impression, the more valuable it will be: for piety, when pure, tends, from its very nature, to spread and propagate itself, and therefore, from every point among the population of this world, at which we can once give it a footing, we may hope it will extend in a wider and wider circle. It is a light, which will be the more universally diffused, the more its radiant points are multiplied. And yet no error can possibly be more fatal than for a Christian to suppose that he could atone for the want of heartfelt and efficient piety in his own quiet sphere, by magnificent plans of remote and doubtful good. The first duty of every follower of the Savior is, unquestionably, as we have already shown, at home,—in his own inmost soul;—his next, in his own narrow circle of personal influence. These posts must be guarded well by every Christian, or else piety will soon lose the little hold she has in the world. But maintaining a high standard of Christian feeling and action in the small circle in which the individual immediately moves, not only *may* not be inconsistent with extensive and wide-spreading benevolence, but it *can* not. Looking at a distance and planning with reference

Sincere motives. Piety begins at home.

to remote and unseen results, will not only not interfere with the progress of piety in the heart, but if such efforts are made with honest sincerity, they will be the most effectual means of promoting it. But then they must be made in the right spirit. The attempt to carry influence in the ways we have described, to other countries, must spring from honest desires to co-operate with God. It is this co-operation, and the moral effect at which it ought to aim, that must be the great stimulus to action, and the pleasure of being a co-worker with God must be the reward; or else such labors will only improve and strengthen the spiritual pride, or the love of ostentation and display, from which they spring.

We have thus clearly before us, the nature of the trust committed to the members of the Christian church of every name; it is a charge to spread the gospel as soon as possible throughout the globe. We are to consider ourselves as not our own, in any sense, but wholly the Lord's, and to regard it as our highest happiness to be permitted to identify ourselves entirely with the progress of his cause. We are to look very watchfully and very faithfully within; for the best way to make religion spread is to keep it pure. We are to do every thing we can to diffuse enjoyment and to increase the influences of holiness in the little circle in which we immediately move; and we are to look abroad over the whole field which human beings occupy, saying with our hearts and with our hands, "Thy kingdom come." To these duties, we should be devoted entirely. Every thing should be subsidiary to them: as we can find no true happiness but in such a work, so we should make no reservations, but consecrate every thing to it, and so identify ourselves with it, as to have no separate interests whatever. The share of attention which each of these various departments of the great work of spreading the gospel, should in each individual case receive, will

of course depend upon the circumstances of each, but together they should monopolize the heart, and be the object of every hour's exertion.

All this is very good theory, perhaps the reader may say, but who lives on these principles in practice? Very few, it must be admitted, but still there are some. The early Christians did, and by means of the example and the efforts which arose from their unreserved consecration of themselves to the cause of God in this world, the principles of Christianity spread with almost inconceivable rapidity, and their progress was not checked until worldliness came in to corrupt the hearts of pretended servants of God, and to destroy all the moral power of piety. A long, dark night ensued, and we yet scarcely see much more than the dawn which follows it. But the success which has attended the faint and feeble efforts which the church has made, within the last century, show most conclusively that nothing but devoted piety in the church, and the efforts which must inevitably spring from it, is wanting, to bring back this world to its Maker,— and that, too, without any very long delay.

It is, perhaps, one of the most mysterious features of divine government, that God has made human souls so dependent upon one another; but though it seems hard for those who must wait unblessed with the light of knowledge and pure religion, until we send it to them, to be left thus, apparently at the mercy of a few unfaithful pretenders to piety, we can easily see how kind to us, it is, for our Maker to repose in us such a trust and to assign to us such a duty. To give man such an enterprise as this, as the object of his life, exalts and ennobles him. It takes him out of the narrow circle of selfishness, and raises him at once, above the groveling pursuits of sin, and gives him an object worthy the powers of an immortal spirit. We feel, if we engage

in it, linked by a common sympathy with all that is great and good in the mighty universe of God; and yet, thus raised, thus exalted as we are, by the moral grandeur of the cause we are permitted to espouse, there is no place for pride. We feel the lofty emotions which our work inspires, on account of the moral greatness of the principles which it is its object to diffuse, and the boundlessness of the field over which they are to be extended, and the countless variety, and lofty moral and intellectual rank of the beings who sympathize with us, or who work by our side,—and the certainty of ultimate and triumphant success. These are the sources of those emotions with which the Christian's bosom swells, when he really comes and gives himself wholly up to his Master's work; his own private and personal share in results so vast, dwindles into insignificance, and pride has no soil, to which its roots can cling. Man thus, by linking himself with God, and giving himself wholly to His work, enjoys the elevation and the happiness of greatness, and is saved from its dangers and sins.

V.—RELIGIOUS DISCUSSION.

We place this title among the subjects brought before the reader in this chapter, rather with the design of excluding than of including it. It is a very doubtful means of doing good. Skill in disputation is a weapon very commonly employed; far too commonly; and our design now is, to show its nature, and what may fairly be expected from it, and especially to define those limits and restrictions to which such efforts to act upon the mind ought to be subjected. Let the reader understand, however, while reading the remarks on this subject, that, like the rest of this work, they are addressed to common Christians, sustaining the ordinary relations and connexions of society. Learned men have sometimes devoted their lives to the work of placing on record the evidences

which their researches have furnished, of the truth and divine authority of the Scriptures, or of the nature of the truths they reveal; and the works thus produced, have been among the strongest bulwarks of Christian faith. Our plan does not lead us to say any thing of efforts like these: it confines us to the attempts continually made to remove religious error, by argument and discussion, in the common intercourse of life; attempts which under certain circumstances are wise and successful; under others they are far worse than useless.

Religious discussion has its sole foundation in real or supposed religious error; and the nature of religious error is very little understood. Let us look at some of its sources.

1. One great source of erroneous impressions, on all subjects, is the power of influences exerted in early life, and which are sometimes so strong as utterly to bid defiance to all argument. Every one has observed the permanency of these early impressions of early life in such cases as the following. A child was once terrified, when very young, by suddenly seeing a snake, as it was playing in the grass; and up to the age of twenty, he retained an unconquerable aversion to the animal, so that his companions used to torment him by forcing upon his observation, *pictures* of snakes,—which would overwhelm him in an agony of terror and suffering. Another was carried to see a man who was shockingly mangled by an accidental explosion, in blasting rocks,—and fifteen years did not obliterate the impression. During all the years of childhood and youth, the effects of gunpowder, in every form, were a continual terror to him. Now will you endeavor to overcome such feelings by argument? Will you go and try to *prove* to these terrified young men, that a picture cannot bite, or that the flash of a little squib cannot endanger them?

Religious antipathies; beyond the reach of argument.

But the reader will say that these are mere *antipathies*; they are not of the nature of erroneous convictions entertained by the understanding. So is a very large proportion of the dislike to religion, and the disbelief of its truths, mere antipathy, and not deliberate conviction. The cases just adduced to illustrate it, are certainly strong ones; but every man who will pause a moment to reflect, must see that a child, brought up under the influence of such associations as are in many families connected with the religious opinions of those who disagree with them, must inevitably, if human nature is consistent with itself, form such an antipathy. It may have men, or it may have opinions, for its objects, but in either case argument, as a corrective, would be utterly thrown away. It would not only be entirely insufficient to produce a change, but it would scarcely have any tendency to do it.

A sufficient allowance is not made for this by the opposite parties in a religious controversy. If one generation takes sides violently, on any question, they inevitably *entail* the quarrel. Their children have scarcely the opportunity to judge for themselves. The laws of the human mind almost compel them to feel as their fathers felt; for it becomes in such cases, a matter of feeling rather than opinion. No one, therefore, ought ever to cherish a harsh or an unkind thought towards any one, on account of his religious errors, if his father led the way.

This influence of early associations has more power than all other causes put together, in the formation of religious opinions. The children of Mahometans become Mahometans themselves, without arguments in favor of the Prophet; and in the Christian world, religious opinions are hereditary, and pass down with exceptions comparatively few and rare, from father to son; so that Popery, and Protestantism, Episcopacy and Dissent, and Presbyterian, Baptist, and Methodist opinions, oc-

cupy, in the main, the same ground, from generation to generation. It is true, indeed, that argument has something to do with this, for though every faith has its defenders, to which all have access, still each child hears chiefly the voice of the one which its father chooses for it. But, notwithstanding this, every inteliigent observer of the human mind, and especially of the habits and susceptibilities of childhood, will at once admit, that other influences than those of argument are the efficient ones, in the production of these almost universal effects.

Let no one infer from these undeniable facts, that men are not accountable for the exercise of their reason in respect to their relations to God. They are accountable. The fact that men follow on so blindly after their parents in this, more than in any other case, is an indication of the cold indifference of the human heart to its religious duty. Parents cannot control their children's opinions and preferences, on other points, so completely; and they could not here, were not the heart so cold, so indifferent, so benumbed in respect to God. When the conscience is aroused, these chains are immediately broken, and the soul goes free to think for itself, and to throw away its shackles for ever. It may escape slowly from their thraldom, but escape it will, if any real penitence and any real love to God can find a place in the heart. So that what is justly to be inferred from these views, is not that men who are in error, are innocent, but that they are no more guilty than those who believe the truth, and yet live in sin. A thousand children, growing up without God, are all guilty for thus living in disobedience to his will; but if they do thus live, the question of their religious belief is not of much consequence as an indication of their real characters. Their belief is probably almost a matter of mere accident; so that, as to their *characters*, it makes no great difference who is right, and who wrong in theory. Their guilt consists in

their *impenitence*, which is common to them all, not in their errors, in which, from accidental circumstances, each may differ from the rest.

When we look around therefore upon society, we should make one great distinction in estimating human character, and that is; between those who love God, and those who love him not; and we must remember that from the very fact that the latter class do not love duty, they will make no honest effort, themselves, to learn what it is. They all drink in whatever is offered to them in childhood. Some are right, and some are wrong, but, as we have seen, accident has been most instrumental in deciding in each case, and *ungodliness* is the common foundation on which all stand. Induce them to abandon sin, and to return to God, in any respect, and their eyes will be opened. Act upon the heart first, and the intellect will rectify itself afterwards; though it will be by steps too hesitating and slow for our impatience to tolerate, unless we have considered, more attentively than most persons have, the extreme and almost unconquerable reluctance with which the power of early associations relinquishes its hold.

The first source of religious error then, is, these associations of early childhood, which reasoning never formed, and which she is utterly incompetent to overthrow.

2. Another very common source of error on all subjects, and especially in religion, is the bias of mind produced by the influence of the *feelings*. The danger of such a bias is universally understood in common life, and is guarded against, in many cases, with great care. Whenever a contention arises between two individuals, the friends and connexions of the respective combatants, with the same facts before their eyes, and guided professedly by the same principles of right and wrong, form

directly opposite opinions, and each party adheres to the views which mere feeling has produced, with inflexible pertinacity. So when any new speculation or plan of improvement is agitated in any community, each man will take sides on the question, just as his interests would be affected by the results. In the former of these cases, it is personal attachment, in the latter, pecuniary interest which constitutes the bias; but any other emotion may produce the same effect. We may mention one other case, which, though common, is melancholy and affecting in the extreme. How often will an unhappy man, conscious that he is unprepared for death, sink into the last stages of a lingering disease, steeled against all sense of the danger which he does not wish to see. His hectic cheek, and gradually sinking powers might give him most certain evidence that he is drawing near to the grave; but he shuts his eyes to every indication of his danger. Just because he wishes and hopes to be restored to health, he resolutely persists in believing that restoration is before him. The delusion, a very happy one, so far as its exhilarating power tends to sustain him under his final sufferings, but very melancholy in its tendency to keep him from finding peace with God, — clings to him to the last; and he sinks under the very hand of death, with an unwavering but baseless confidence that health and happiness are soon to return.

This tendency of the human mind is universally known; every man, in consequence of it, almost instinctively distrusts the opinions of others, where their feelings or their interests are involved in the question; and a wise man, under such circumstances, will distrust his own.

Perhaps there is no class of subjects on which men are more in danger from this source, than those connected with religion. The various interpretations which are given to the declarations of the Bible, alter very con-

siderably their force, in respect to the degree of restraint they impose upon human desires, and to the amount of sacrifice which they require in the service of God. A great reason, therefore, in many cases, why men cannot see the evidence of a particular truth, is the practical consequences which flow from it. We see this very clearly in those cases where certain abstract views of duty relate more or less directly to the common pursuits of life, so as to interfere with the business of one man, while they leave that of another untouched. The former will make great opposition to that which, in the view of the other, is most obviously and unquestionably true. Now in some such cases, where great and obvious principles of common morality are concerned, the proper course undoubtedly is, to throw such a blaze of light upon the subject, as to force the guilty perseverer in sin to see his duty. In regard, however, to what are more strictly called religious truths, mere argument in such cases is of little avail.

A man for instance has made up his mind to live in sin, and perhaps in vice. He does what he knows to be wrong from day to day, though conscience, not wholly silenced, murmurs feebly in those hours of solitude which he cannot wholly avoid,— warning him of the danger of a judgment to come. He at length is almost accidentally told, that there is no future retribution. His mind springs spontaneously into the belief of it. He needs no argument. He may indeed listen to a few reasons, for the purpose of laying them up as weapons of defence, but his own belief is, after all, founded on his feelings. Now argument and discussion with such a man will ordinarily do no good. While he appears to listen to you he is only planning his own reply. Reasoning has not placed him in his entrenchment, and reasoning cannot drive him from it. Must he then, the reader may ask, be left hopelessly? No. The truth has an ally and an

advocate in his own breast, which, though he may have silenced it, he cannot destroy; and our hope of success is in making its warning voice heard again. Bring *duty* before him; lead him to see that he disobeys God, and that his expected impunity, can be no excuse for sin. If he can but see that he is a sinner, he will go to the Bible, and *that* will set him right about the future consequences of sin.

The cases we have considered thus far, are those in which the mind is led to reject what is true, because the truth is, in itself, unpleasant, on account of the practical duties which rest upon it; but the mind is very often blinded in a little different way. Men are often kept in error, not because they have any special objection to the truth itself, or to the practical consequences, in general, which result from it, but because they are unwilling to acknowledge that they have been in the wrong. A man who has always been on one side, and is so universally regarded, cannot admit that he has been mistaken, without feeling mortification himself, and exciting the ill-will of others. Light however comes in, which he secretly perceives is sufficient to show him that he has been wrong; but he turns his eye away from it, because he instinctively feels what must inevitably follow from its admission.

These and similar causes act so universally, that the power of reasoning and argument in changing the religious opinions of men is exceedingly circumscribed. If men were willing to perceive the truth, we should have nothing to do, but to prove to them what it is; but proof is so abundant every where, that it will of course come to the soul as fast as it is ready and willing to receive it. The first thing then, generally, is to get men into the path of duty. They all have truth enough to enlighten the beginning of it,— and more light will certainly shine upon it, as they go on.

Useless disputes. Language misunderstood. Human character.

There is, however, a vast amount of useless discussion arising from religious differences, which the foregoing heads of remark will not explain. They who are in some degree willing to abandon sin, and do their duty, still see many subjects in very different lights, and become involved in endless disputes respecting them. Some of the more common sources of such profitless controversies come next in our enumeration.

3. Disputes founded on difference in the understanding of language. Take for example, human character. There is no field more open to human observation than this, and perhaps there are few subjects in regard to *the facts* of which, men are more universally agreed; and yet there is scarcely any one which has given rise to more endless discussions.

In their practical dealings with mankind, it is plain that intelligent men of all parties take substantially the same views of human conduct and character. They who, in the argument, have the lowest views of the natural character, are not more suspicious or severe in practice than others; and those who speak most highly of the native purity and the spontaneous virtues of the human heart, are not thrown off their guard by their theories. As to the facts, there is, and there can be, scarcely any disagreement. We all know how men think and feel about God, and on what principles they act in relation to one another. No company of bank directors, or board of managers, or cabinet council, probably ever differed very seriously in respect to the success of proposed measures, on account of the difference of their views in respect to the character and the tendencies of human nature. They may belong to very different denominations, and may have expressed their views in theory, in conflicting language, but when they leave theory, they have no difficulty about the facts.

Nature of disputes about it. Misunderstanding.

I speak of course here of questions about human character as it is, not about the feelings with which God regards it; this is evidently a different point, and one in which disagreement would not necessarily affect the practice, in the common business of life. But any real difference in respect to the actual extent of the depravity of the heart would affect this practice. Now notwithstanding all the disputes with which mankind have been agitated on this subject, there is harmony, when they come to act. The disputes are at once forgotten; men of the most opposite theoretical views, work side by side, differing in nothing except that they who have had the most extensive experience, are most completely on their guard.

Now how happens it that under such circumstances, there should be such a perpetual dispute when there can be after all but little real disagreement? Of course, I refer here, as has been remarked before, to a disagreement about the actual principles by which human nature is controlled, and not to the view which God takes of these principles. How can there be such a disagreement? The explanation is that the terms employed in the discussion convey to different individuals very different ideas. One party understands the language used by the other, in describing human character, as implying moral perversion so complete, that the heart would take delight in promoting suffering, and love moral evil in all cases, on its own account, rather than moral good. They would expect to see it hating one being because he is merciful, and another because he is faithful and true. They would expect men with such characters as they suppose the language in question to imply, would abhor justice and mercy, and benevolence, not in those particular cases merely where the operation of these principles come into collision with their own interest, but in the abstract, and universally. They would expect to see them ap-

plauding cruelty, and admiring black ingratitude, and carrying their principles out into practice by devising misery for all around them, merely for the pleasure of witnessing it, and bestowing a double share of their malignity upon those who had been most friendly to them.

Such a character as this is what one class of persons understand by the language used, and in the dispute they merely maintain that this is not the actual character of mankind. Nobody believes it is, but the dispute goes on, one party contending for one view and the other opposing not the opinion of their antagonist but a totally different one; and which seems equally preposterous to both. If they should come to an explanation, the chief question would be, by what terms they should describe what every body sees, and what their practice proves that they see substantially alike.

When we come even to such terms as *can*, *will*, *freedom*, *punishment*, *unity*, *person*, *sin*, *affections* and a hundred others, which are the perpetual topics of religious controversy, though they are plain and explicit enough in common use, they have various shades of signification as terms in a metaphysical argument. These shades cannot be defined; they elude all attempts to fix them, and yet they very seriously affect the views a man will form of the propositions into which they enter; and many and many a time, controversialists have found, after a long discussion, that they had misunderstood each other from the beginning.

Take for instance the first word of the foregoing list. It seems a very simple word, and one that is very generally understood. So it is, as far as is necessary for popular use. But any person may convince himself that when used for other purposes, it is not understood alike, by trying this experiment. On some occasion, when ten or twenty or more individuals, not accustomed to meta-

Proposed question, and dispute arising from it.

physical speculations, are together, propose this question. "*Can* any one of the company go and lie down in a burning fire? *Considering all the circumstances of the case*, the nature of fire, his dislike of pain, his sound mind,—considering all these circumstances, *can* he do it?" After pausing a moment for reflection, so that each individual can form an independent judgment, call for a simple answer,—ay, or no. The company will probably be about equally divided. The larger it is, the more nearly equal generally will be the division. If, now, the individuals are allowed to discuss the question, each person presenting the view which guided his own vote, and then the question is put again, the diversity of opinion will still remain, and in ordinary cases they would never come to an agreement. And yet there is no difference of opinion about the facts. Every one knows perfectly well what is the actual fact, as to the power of an individual in respect to such a case. The whole apparent diversity is produced by different ideas as to the precise metaphysical signification of the little word *can*. Practised minds would have no difficulty in such a case; they would immediately define the word, and give two answers according to the two significations, and they would be unanimous.

Now no class of disputes are more common than endless discussions which are precisely of such a character as this would be. The danger is understood by scholars who are at all conversant with the nature of such inquiries, and they make very special efforts, though they are often ineffectual, to guard against it. But the mass of mankind are very imperfectly aware of this source of difficulty, and they involve themselves in endless disputes, the parties calling things by different names, and each combatant astonished at the stupidity and obstinacy of the other, in refusing to see what is so perfectly plain.

Unimportant questions. Pride and self conceit.

4. Another source of endless and fruitless discussions, is disputing about questions which can be of no practical consequence, however they may be decided. Such as the origin of sin, the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, the salvation of infants, the precise metaphysical relationship of the Son to the Father. We have said they are of no practical consequence; of course an ingenious reasoner can contrive to connect practical consequences with any subject whatever, and in his zeal he will exaggerate the importance of the connexion. In fact every subject in the moral world is more or less connected with every other one: nothing stands out entirely detached and isolated, and consequently a question which its arguers will admit to be merely a theoretical one, will never be found.

It would of course be absurd to condemn all discussion of such points as the above, and others similar to them. The calm philosophical consideration of such questions is perfectly proper. It is bringing them into the field of religious truth, and making them the means of religious divisions,—each party jealous and suspicious of those who think differently from himself,—and leaving the weightier matters of judgment, mercy and faith, to wrangle about differences which can do at most but little harm:—this is the spirit which it is our object to condemn.

5. The last source of religious error, and useless religious disputes which we shall mention, is the pride and self-conceit which keeps men from realizing that there is or can be any subject which is actually beyond the reach of their powers. Men will indeed admit this, in the abstract, but then they evince the insincerity of such an acknowledgment, by having a distinct and well-defined theory, on every subject which can be brought before them.

But the truth is, and every mind which really reflects on its condition and its powers must perceive it, that the beams of reason and revelation, which shine upon our path, afford a distinct illumination only for those objects which are immediately around us, and with which we have a direct and practical connexion. Beyond this circle, and it is a much narrower one than is perhaps generally supposed, there is a region of doubt and darkness, into which the human mind will endeavor in vain to extend its vision. In some cases, we attempt to define accurately, what from its very nature, is not susceptible of accurate definition: we assign exact boundaries in our conceptions, when the subject does not admit of them in reality. We make sweeping assertions, disposing of whole classes of subjects at a word, or we take a general principle which is perhaps true in the main, and carry it out to extremes, to which it cannot fairly extend. We do this either from the influence of an almost universal tendency of the human mind to love sweeping generalities, or else because it is troublesome to pause, and reflect, and ascertain exceptions. In fact, a reflecting man will often detect himself believing a proposition merely because, when expressed, it sounds antithetic and striking, or because it is comprehensive and distinct, and, right or wrong, presents a convenient solution for whole classes of difficulties. The human mind will, in a word, run into almost any belief, by which it may be saved the labor of patient thought, and at the same time avoid the mortification of acknowledging its ignorance.

From these views of the origin and nature of religious error, and the effect of argument and discussion as a means of removing it, it seems to be pretty clear that those endless disputes and controversies which are perpetually springing up in the common walks of life, by

which the peace and harmony of families and villages are so often destroyed, are labor spent in vain. The Christian endeavors to reason his brother Christian or his worldly neighbor out of his errors, and begins, perhaps, with honest motives, and certainly with sanguine hopes of success. But he finds that however exclusively he may imagine the *truth* to be on one side, there may be *talking* on both, and he soon becomes irritated by formidable opposition, when he expected an immediate surrender. He soon becomes excited, and forgetting the spiritual value of the truth, he contends for victory in the contest, and if he had any right feeling at the beginning, it is all gone before the conversation is closed.

The best way for private Christians to prove the truth, is to let it exercise its whole power upon their own hearts, and then to exhibit its fruits. Try to promote the happiness, and to improve the hearts and lives of those around you, and you will evince the efficacy, and the value, and the truth of the opinions you hold, better than in any other way. If a pestilential disease were raging in a city, and if the community were divided in regard to the method of cure, how preposterous would it be for those who are well, to leave the sick and suffering, and suspend all active efforts, and waste their time in disputes about the nature of the vital powers,— the character of the disease,— and the operation of the various remedies. It would be absurd; but let each one go and try his own plan, and the success of the right one, will secure its universal adoption; and that too, with a rapidity which will be just in proportion to the degree in which all disputing on the subject is avoided. In the same manner, success in turning men to holiness is the great criterion of religious truth. It must be so; the world is full of hearts alienated from God, and enslaved to sin: and nothing but true religion can break these chains, and bring back the wanderer to pardon and

happiness. Let the advocates then, of every system of religious truth, go abroad among mankind, and try their remedies. That which is really from Heaven must succeed, and success must decide its triumph.

In fact the little progress which religion is making in the world is made in this way. Disputes on all subjects which are involved in real difficulty, generally result in a division of the auditors into parties, proportioned, pretty nearly, to the abilities of the combatants; and in religion there is a bias, which is altogether on the wrong side; discussion, therefore, here will be peculiarly uncertain in its results. It is the visible moral effect of the truth, which really sustains its influence in this world. It is *moral power*, so evident and so irresistible, which enables pure Christianity to stand her ground; and every thing which diminishes this, or limits the sphere of its influence, or draws off the attention of men from it,— every thing of this kind, retards most directly and most powerfully the progress of the Savior's cause. Let every class of Christians then, who think they love the truth, not waste their time in disputing with their neighbors, but cherish the pure spirit of piety in their hearts, and cultivate in themselves and in all around them, its genuine and happy fruits. The Christian's rule of influence is not to endeavor to establish the truth in the human *intellect* by the power of subtle disputation; but "by *manifestation* of the truth, to commend themselves to every man's *conscience*, in the sight of God." In other words, we must bring piety forward; its nature and tendencies must be made to appear in this world, and to stand out in bold and striking relief, among the prevailing miseries and sins But this must be done, too, with the constant conviction that THE CONSCIENCE is the great avenue by which it is to find access to the human heart, if it is admitted at all.

CHAPTER X.

THE PARTING PROMISE,

OR THE INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

At the time of our Savior's crucifixion, any one who should have looked abroad at the condition and character of mankind, would have pronounced the attempt which the twelve disciples were about to make, the most wild and impracticable scheme which the human heart could devise. Jesus knew, when he commanded his followers to engage in such an enterprise, that they would need help. He coupled therefore a promise to his command,—the one as remarkable as the other.

The Savior's presence with his followers assists them in their work, undoubtedly, in several ways. It cheers and sustains them. It gives them guidance and direction in difficulty and doubt; and the feeling that they are always with their leader, enjoying his presence and sympathy, gives devoted and honest Christians a support in difficulty, and trial, and affliction, which nothing else could afford.

But Jesus had often said before, that men, when turned from sin, where turned by influences from above, which influences he was to send down from the Father. We cannot therefore doubt that in this his parting promise, he referred in part at least to the co-operation which he should himself render them, in all their efforts to save souls. The disciples understood this, and the first triumphs of Christianity were, in a simple but beautiful manner, ascribed to him: "And *the Lord* added to the church daily, such as should be saved."

Their Master, too, gave the disciples an early and most signal proof that he remembered his promise, and was able to fulfil it, by changing Saul, their bitterest and most powerful foe, to their most devoted and most efficient friend. The apostle always attributed his conversion to the direct interposition of his Savior; and with such proofs as the early Christians thus had, that a divine and unwonted influence was exerted upon human hearts, in connexion with their efforts, they could not but take courage, and press on in a cause, which, without such aid, must have been very soon abandoned.

We have the same evidence now, as I intend to show in this chapter, by a narrative of facts,— such as are in substance very common in modern times, and which prove that the enterprise of bringing the world back to God is not a hopeless one. The narrative will show too that the same kind of aid, so indispensable to success in such a cause as this, is still rendered. Before coming to it, however, a few considerations respecting the general subject must first be offered.

There are certainly great difficulties in connexion with the truth that whenever men turn away from their sins and enter God's service, it is through spiritual life which he awakens in the soul. Into these difficulties, we do not now propose to enter. We feel and know that men are free and accountable; the Bible most explicitly states, too, that all holy desires in the human heart come from God. If however, the question is raised how holy feeling can be the spontaneous movement of the moral agent which exercises it, and yet be the gift of God, we may lose ourselves in boundless perplexities, and return from the fruitless pursuits more dissatisfied than ever. The difficulty is, however, in the *subject*, rather than in the *truth;* that is, it appertains to a whole field of thought, and not to one particular proposition. It is difficult for us to understand how a being can be created at all, with-

Subject obscure. Plausible reasoning not to be relied upon.

out having his character determined by the act of creation. - If the question, what his first moral acts shall be, is *determined by any thing*, it would seem that it must be by something in his moral constitution, as it was framed by his Maker; and if it is not determined *by any thing*, it must, one would think, be left a matter of pure accident; and that which is matter of pure accident, cannot be of a moral nature. We might thus, make out a very respectable argument *a priori*, that a free moral agent cannot be created; as creating power, unless it leaves the moral character a matter of mere accident, must do something to determine it, in which case it would seem that it is itself responsible for the acts which follow.

It will of course be understood that we do not offer this argument as a sound one,— but only as plausible reasoning which is not to be relied upon, on account of the obscurity and difficulty of the whole subject. Take for instance the question suggested by the last lines of the preceding paragraph;— can creative power really *determine* the character of the being it forms, without being itself morally responsible for that character. It is a question which might be disputed by philosophers for ages, without victory on either side. The difficulty is in the subject. Wherever we approach it, all is obscurity and doubt. We cannot trust our reasonings, nor believe our conclusions.

There is no objection, perhaps, to an occasional discussion of such points, by Christians, if it is done with the same feelings with which we should investigate any other difficult question, in metaphysics or philosophy: but we must not bring them into the region of religious feeling and duty, and press upon our fellow Christians the theories which we may ourselves be led to form. What human minds see so imperfectly, they never see alike. On such subjects they cannot agree. What is substance to one, is shadow to another: and a thought

which, from one point of view, has one set of aspects and relations, from a different one has another, totally diverse. Besides, in the higher regions of metaphysical investigation, words, as a medium of communication, if not as a medium of thought, lose their significancy, and thus even the conceptions which we have, though perhaps clear in the mind, cannot be clearly expressed. In fact, the human intellect, when it roams away into the profound recesses of metaphysical philosophy, can lead on *other* minds, but a very little way. Intercourse by language very soon fails. We endeavor, by nice definition, and careful etymological discrimination, to lead it on as far as it will go; and it is often long before its growing inadequacy is understood and felt. It must, however, at last be abandoned, and the mind then, if it advances at all, must advance alone and silently. It perceives truths, or at least, it has conceptions which it cannot communicate, and when at last, bewildered in the increasing perplexity of the labyrinth, it gives over, and returns, it can never convey to another mind any precise idea of the point to which it had gone.

Now nearly all the disputes on this subject which have agitated the church, lie in that doubtful region, where the mind can see but dimly, and must report even more dimly than it sees. Language has lost its power, though he who uses it does not perceive its weakness, and hence the discussions are made up almost entirely of explanations and corrections, and definitions of terms, and charges of misunderstanding or misrepresentation. We had better leave the whole ground. Believe what the Bible says, and look at the confirmations of it afforded so abundantly by experience, and leave discussions of theories for a future day.

We come then to the facts in the case, which are, that men will not turn away from sin, and begin, with broken-hearted penitence, to serve God, without his

aid. There is no way of inducing them to do it. You can bring clearly before them the obligations which they are under to God, but if they still prefer the world and sin, what more can you do? You can exhibit the moral beauty of gratitude, but if you exhibit it to a heart naturally ungrateful, if such an one should be found, what good would it do? You cannot *prove* that if a man has received kindness from another he ought to show kindness in return. If the person you address does not perceive it, at once, there is nothing to be said about it; argument would be utterly unavailing. In the same manner, if he sees it, but does not feel it, you cannot alter his heart by reasoning.

There is a mistaken view of man's moral dependence, which in some cases produces one very sad effect. Persons sometimes think that the power to renew them is so completely in their Maker's hands that they must wait for him to exercise it. They seem to have the impression that God will *repent* for them, and they are looking to him to do it. Now this is very evidently absurd. The Holy Spirit will never repent *for* you; no, *never*. From the very nature of things he never can. You must repent yourself, though if you do it, it will be in the exercise of spiritual power supplied from on high.

The absurdity of such passive waiting to *be acted upon*, may be well illustrated, by some of the miracles of the Savior. A man, for example, comes to Jesus Christ with a withered hand. It hangs lifeless by his side. It is insensible and motionless, a symbol of the moral condition of the human soul when dead in sin. He asks help from the Savior; and what is the reply? "Stretch forth thine hand."

"How can I stretch it forth? Its utter lifelessness," might the poor patient say to the Savior, "is the very reason why I bring it to thee. I cannot stretch it forth unless its life and power are previously restored."

"Stretch forth thine hand," is however the command, and though we might gather innumerable *theoretical* difficulties about such a command, there are none in practice. The patient obeys. The very instant of exertion on his part, is the very instant of returning life and power. His hand obeys his volition. It obeys it however by a power which a supernatural interposition supplied. He could not have raised his arm without external aid, and on the other hand, he could not have external aid, without making the effort.

Now every person, who, after understanding God's commands, defers obedience until the power of the Holy Spirit is exerted upon him to lead him to do it, seems to be almost precisely in the condition of the man with the withered hand, if, after the Savior had directed him to stretch it forth, he had stood waiting, before he made the effort, to have life restored to it. He must feel, he thinks, the blood beginning to circulate, and sensation returning, before he has any thing to do! His arm would, in such a case, remain withered for ever. So the soul which has sunk into the lethargy of waiting for God's Spirit, may wait for ever in vain. Man must repent, himself. He must love God, himself; he must abandon sin, himself. God will not do the work for us; he will only infuse the spiritual vitality by which it is to be done.

It is melancholy to observe that when the word of God, or the obvious principles of duty, mark out a straight course, man *will* find devious and wandering paths, turning off to the right and to the left,— any way, just to avoid the narrow path of duty. One class of persons, interested, or professing to be interested, in the question of their salvation, fold their arms in quiet inaction, waiting, as they say, for influences from above to lead them to their duty. Others, aroused perhaps from this condition, go zealously to work to purchase their salvation,— to fabricate repentance and faith by their

own power alone. Self-confident, self-sufficient, and filled with spiritual pride, they think to turn their own hearts to God, without receiving any new life from him. Brought back from their wanderings upon one side of the truth, away they go immediately upon the other, in an error as dangerous, nay as fatal as before. For, after all, it makes little difference whether a man gives up the kingdom of heaven altogether, or attempts to enter it without being born again. In either case, he continues dead in trespasses and sins. The difference is, that, in the one, he lies in acknowledged lifelessness,— in the other, his cadaverous form is clothed in the garments, and placed in the attitude of life; but stiffened limbs, and a countenance of death-like expression betray its case. No, *we must be born again.*

The modes and forms which moral renewal by the Holy Spirit assumes in the soul are innumerable; and the truths which seem to be employed as the means of affecting the heart, are almost equally varied. All that we know, is, that while the mass of mankind go on obstinately in sin, individuals of every possible character, and in every varietyof circumstances, do repent and return to duty. Sometimes it is the little child, knowing scarcely any thing but that it has a Maker; again, it is some hardened and violent opposer of God and religion, who throws down his weapons and comes humbled and broken-hearted to the foot of the cross. Sometimes one well instructed in religious truth, and faithfully warned of guilt and of danger, will, after years of indifference and thoughtlessness, suddenly relent and come to the Savior, and at others whole communities will be aroused; and though they could before be affected by no exhortations, and no remonstrances, they will now suddenly awake, and flock in crowds to the service of God. The Holy Spirit can operate any where and with any means. Sometimes he whispers gentlv to a single one, in soli-

tude,— sometimes he spreads solemnity over the crowded meeting. To-day he gives meaning and power to the Scriptures, as the reader, at his lonely fireside, seeks their guidance,— to-morrow he indites a prayer, or gives to reflections which have been utterly unable to affect the heart, power to overwhelm it with emotion, brings up sins which have been looked upon with cold unconcern, in their true character, and draws them out before the soul in gloomy array. He awakens conscience, and quickens the memory; he disrobes the world of her alluring garb, and gives a spiritual meaning to the events of Providence. Life, seen by the light which he brings into the soul, wears its own serious and sober hue; eternity rises,— its distant realities draw near,— doubts and uncertainties vanish, and the soul to which this heavenly messenger is sent, walks forth redeemed from sin, purified from pollution, set free from its chains, — its powers expanded and its aims and views enlarged; prepared henceforth to be a holy and happy child of God, instead of the degraded and polluted child of sin.

Now it is aid like this that Christians are to look for, when they endeavor to promote the cause of religion in the world, and it seems to be rendered just in proportion to the humility and sincerity and devotedness of the efforts which are made. Bad feelings and sinister aims are so often mingled with Christian zeal, and so often assume its form, that in ordinary cases, we have a sad mixture of the fruits of genuine piety, with those of hypocrisy and sin. There is, however, such a thing as moral renewal, by means of unwonted influences upon human hearts, which the ordinary operations of the mind cannot explain. The following narrative is not an account of a very uncommon case. It is a specimen of hundreds which have occurred within a few years in our land, and which have been fully equal to this in its results. An actual case like this, narrated particularly,

may give the reader a more vivid conception of what co-operation from above, Christians may expect, than general remarks upon the promises which the scriptures contain. Such cases certainly afford a striking commentary upon the Savior's words, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

THE COLLEGE REVIVAL.

As probably but few of my readers have had opportunity to form any acquaintance with the interior of a New-England College, or with the nature of college life, I must commence my narrative with a description of the place in which the scene is laid.

The appearance which a New-England College exhibits to a traveller, is that of a group of large brick buildings, generally a hundred feet long, and four stories high, standing usually upon an eminence, or upon a level plain, on the borders of some quiet country village. The buildings are connected with one another, and approached from various directions, by gravelled walks, and perhaps, ornamented with shrubbery; and one among them, distinguished usually by a form somewhat different from the rest, and surmounted by a sort of cupola, indicates that the whole constitute some public establishment.

A fresh admission of students takes place in the autumn of each year, consisting ordinarily of young men, from twenty years of age, down to thirteen. These students are united into one class, and commence one course of study, which extends through a period of four years. During these four years, there will of course be three more admissions, making four classes, and *only* four in the institution at the same time.

The large buildings I have alluded to, are divided into rooms, as nearly alike as possible;—eight usually upon a floor, and consequently, thirty-two in all. Each one of these rooms is assigned to two of the members of the

class admitted, and it is to be for one year their home. The first day of the collegiate year, those portions of the building assigned to the Freshmen, as the last admitted are called, exhibit a scene of very peculiar and striking character. The bustle of preparation,— moving in, and putting up furniture,— the interest excited by the novelty of the mode of life they are now to lead, and the lingering recollections of home, left perhaps for ever,— resolutions of diligence and fidelity in the course of study before them,— and the various other feelings excited by the new and strange faces and objects around, all conspire to give to the Freshman's first day at college, a marked and striking character, and to fill it with new and strong emotions which he never can forget.

In every class there is a large number of youthful members, whose parents' situation in life is such, that they have been the objects of constant attention from infancy, and have accordingly been early fitted for college, and sent to the institution before their minds are sufficiently matured, and their moral principles firmly enough established, to resist the new and strong temptations to which they are henceforth to be exposed. Others are older and more mature. Many of these have prepared themselves for college by their own exertions, and have entered under the influence of strong desires to avail themselves of its privileges. In these two classes may be found almost every variety of human character. Every virtue and every vice here exhibit themselves. There is infidelity, cold, calculating, malicious infidelity, establishing her wretched reign in the bosoms of young men just opening into manhood. There is vice, secret and open, of every species, and in every degree. There is intemperance and profaneness, and hatred of religion, and an open and reckless opposition to the cause of God and holiness, scarcely ever surpassed by the animosity of any veteran foe.

The lines between the enemies and the friends of God are thus drawn in college more distinctly than in almost any other community:— and the young and inexperienced in every new class, are marked out by the idle, dissipated, and abandoned, for their prey. The victim first listens to language and sentiments which undermine his regard for the principles of duty, and weaken those cords which Christian parents had bound around his heart, when he left his early home, and he soon falls more and more under the influence of these ungodly companions. Half allured by their persuasions and half compelled by their rude intrusions into his room, he spends the hours which college laws allot to study, in idle reading, or in games of chance or skill. He first listens to ridicule of religious persons, and then joins in it, and next begins to ridicule and despise religion itself. The officers of college do all in their power to arrest his progress. They see the first indications of his beginning to go astray, in the neglect of his studies, and in the irregularity of his attendance upon college duties; and again and again appoint one of their number to warn him, and expostulate with him, and kindly to put him on his guard. How many such efforts have I made! As I write these paragraphs, I can recall these interviews to mind with almost the distinctness of actual vision. A short time after sending the messenger for the one who was to receive the friendly admonition, I would hear his timid rap at the door. He would enter with a look of mingled guilt, fear, and shame, or sometimes with a step and countenance of assumed assurance. How many times in such circumstances, have I tried in vain to gain access to the heart! I have endeavored to draw him into conversation about his father and mother, and the scenes of home and childhood, that I might insensibly awaken recollections of the past, and bring back long lost feelings, and reunite broken ties. I have tried to

lead him to anticipate the future, and see the dangers of idleness, dissipation, and vice. I have endeavored to draw forth and encourage the feeble resolution, and by sympathy, and kindness, and promises of aid, to bring back the wanderer to duty and to happiness. He would listen in cold and respectful silence, and go away unchanged; perhaps, to make a few feeble resolutions, soon to be forgotten; but more probably to turn into ridicule the moral lecture, as he would call it, which he had received; and to go on, with a little more caution and secrecy perhaps, but with increased hardihood and rapidity, in the course of sin.

In many cases, college censures and punishments frequently follow, until expulsion closes the story. In other cases, the individuals conceal their guilt, while they become more and more deeply involved in it, and more and more hardened. They associate with one another, and at length, in some cases, form a little community where ungodliness, infidelity, and open sin, have confirmed an unquestioned sway.

I must say a word or two now in regard to the ordinary routine of daily life at college, in order that the description which is to follow, may be better understood. Very early in the morning, the observer may see lights at a few of the windows of the buildings inhabited by the students. They mark the rooms occupied by the more industrious or more resolute, who rise and devote an hour or two to their books by lamp-light on the winter mornings. About day, the bell awakens the multitude of sleepers in all the rooms, and in a short time they are to be seen issuing from the various doors, with sleepy looks, and with books under their arms, and some adjusting their hurried dress. The first who come down, go slowly, others with quicker and quicker step, as the tolling of the bell proceeds:— and the last few stragglers run with all speed, to secure their places before the bell

ceases to toll. When the last stroke is sounded, it usually finds one or two too late, who stop short suddenly, and return slowly to their rooms.

The President or one of the Professors reads a portion of Scripture by the mingled light of the pulpit lamps, and the beams which come in from the reddening eastern sky. He then offers the morning prayer. The hundreds of young men before him exhibit the appearance of respectful attention, except that four or five, appointed for the purpose, in different parts of the chapel, are looking carefully around to observe and note upon their bills, the absentees. A few also, not fearing God or regarding their duty, conceal under their cloaks, or behind a pillar or a partition between the pews, the book which contains their morning lesson:— and attempt to make up, as well as the faint but increasing light will enable them, for the time wasted in idleness or dissipation on the evening before. When prayers are over the several classes repair immediately to the rooms assigned respectively to them, and recite the first lesson of the day.

During the short period which elapses between the recitation and the breakfast bell, college is a busy scene. Fires are kindling in every room. Groups are standing in every corner, or hovering around the newly-made fires:— parties are running up and down the stairs two steps at a time, with the ardor and activity of youth:— and now and then, a fresh crowd is seen issuing from the door of some one of the buildings, where a class has finished its recitation, and comes forth to disperse to their rooms;—followed by their instructer, who walks away to his house in the village. The breakfast bell brings out the whole throng again, and gathers them around the long tables in the Common's Hall, or else scatters them among the private families in the neighborhood.

Study hours. The idle and negligent. The afternoon. Evening.

An hour after breakfast the bell rings, to mark the commencement of study-hours:— when the students are required by college laws to repair to their respective rooms, which answer the three-fold purpose of parlor, bed-room, and study, to prepare for their recitation at eleven o'clock. They, however, who choose to evade this law, can do it without much danger of detection. The great majority comply, but some go into their neighbors' rooms to receive assistance in their studies, some lay aside the dull text-book, and read a tale, or play a game: and others, farther gone in the road of idleness and dissipation, steal secretly away from college, and ramble in the woods, or skate upon the ice, or find some rendezvous of dissipation in the village, evading their tasks like truant boys. They, of course, are marked as absent; but pretended sickness will answer for an excuse, they think, once or twice, and they go on, blind to the certainty of the disgrace and ruin, which must soon come.

The afternoon is spent like the forenoon, and the last recitation of the winter's day, is just before the sun goes down. An hour is allotted to it, and then follow evening prayers, at the close of which the students issue from the chapel, and walk in long procession to supper.

It is in the evening, however, that the most striking peculiarities of college life, exhibit themselves. Sometimes literary societies assemble, organized and managed by the students, where they hold debates, or entertain each other with declamations, essays, and dialogues. Sometimes a religious meeting is held, attended by a portion of the professors of religion, and conducted by an officer; at other times the students remain in their rooms, some quietly seated by their fire, one on each side, reading, writing, or preparing the lessons for the following morning:— others assemble for mirth and dissipation, or prowl around the entries and

College mischief. Frequent consequences. Efforts of the officers.

halls, to perpetrate petty mischief, breaking the windows of some hapless Freshman,— or burning nauseous drugs at the keyhole of his door,— or rolling logs down stairs, and running instantly into a neighboring room so as to escape detection;— or watching at an upper window to pour water unobserved upon some fellow student passing in or out below;— or plugging up the keyhole of the chapel door, to prevent access to it for morning prayers; — or gaining access to the bell by false keys, and cutting the rope, or filling it with water to freeze during the night:— or some other of the thousand modes of doing mischief to which the idle and flexible Sophomore is instigated by some calculating, and malicious mischief-maker in a higher class. After becoming tired of this, they gather together in the room of some dissolute companion, and there prepare themselves a supper, with food they have plundered from a neighboring poultry yard, and utensils obtained in some similar mode. Ardent spirit sometimes makes them noisy;— and a college officer, at half past nine, breaks in upon them, and exposure and punishment are the consequences;— disgrace, suspension, and expulsion for themselves, and bleeding hearts for parents and sisters at home. At other times, with controlled and restrained indulgence, they sit till midnight, sowing the bitter seeds of vice; undermining health, destroying all moral sensibility, and making almost sure the ruin of their souls.

In the meantime, the officers of the institution, with a fidelity and an anxious interest, which is seldom equalled by any solicitude except that which is felt by parents for their children, struggle to resist the tide. They watch, they observe, they have constant records kept, and in fact, they go as far as it is possible to go, in obtaining information about the character and history of each individual, without adopting a system of espionage, which the nature of the institution, and the age of a

majority of the pupils, renders neither practicable nor proper. They warn every individual who seems to be in danger, with greater and greater distinctness, according to the progress he seems to be making, and as soon as evidence will justify it, they remove every one whose stay seems dangerous to the rest; but still the evil will increase, in spite of all the ordinary human means, which can be brought against it.

Such is college, and such substantially was the condition of Amherst College, in April, 1827, at the time of my narrative. Faithful religious instruction was given on the Sabbath, at the chapel, where the students were required to attend, and we were accustomed to hold also, a meeting for familiar religious instruction one evening during the week. At this meeting, however, scarcely any were present;—a small portion of the actual members of the church were accustomed to attend, but never any one else. If a single individual, not professedly a Christian, had come in, for a single evening, it would have been noticed as a rare occurrence, and talked of by the officers as something unexpected and extraordinary. Our hearts ached, and our spirits sunk within us, to witness the coldness and hardness of heart towards God and duty, which reigned among so large a number of our pupils. Every private effort which we could make with individuals, entirely failed, and we could see too, that those who professed to love the Savior, were rapidly losing their interest in his cause, and becoming engrossed in literary ambition and college rivalry, dishonoring God's cause, and gradually removing every obstacle to the universal prevalence of vice and sin.

There was then in college, a young man, who had been among the foremost in his opposition to religion. His talents and his address gave him a great deal of personal influence, which was of such a character as to be a constant source of solicitude to the government. He

A student. Letter to the author. Writer's account of the condition of college.

was repeatedly involved in difficulties with the officers on account of his transgressions of the College laws, and so well known were his feelings on the subject, that when at a government meeting, during the progress of the revival, we were told with astonishment, by the President, that this young man was suffering great distress on account of his sins, it was supposed by one of the officers, that it must be all a pretence, feigned to deceive the President, and make sport for his companions. The President did not reply to the suggestion, but went to visit him; and when I next saw him, he said, "There's no *pretence* there. If the Spirit of God is not at work upon his heart, I know nothing about the agency of the Spirit."

That young man is now the pastor of a church, active and useful, and when commencing this narrative, I wrote to him to send me such reminiscences of this scene as might remain upon his mind. He writes me thus.

"Very dear Sir,

"My obligations to you as a friend and instructer make me anxious to fulfil my promise of drawing up a sketch of the revival at Amherst College, during the last two or three weeks of April, 1827. I have been delayed partly by sickness, and the unusual pressure of duties here, partly by the difficulty of settling in my mind a clear idea of what you wish, and partly by the impossibility of reviving the memory of facts and impressions in the exact order of their occurrence. If this communication should reach you too late to answer your purpose, it will at least prove my wish to yield you such assistance as I may.

"For a considerable time previous, the subject of religion in college had fallen into great neglect;—even the outward forms were very faintly observed. During nearly two years in which I had been connected with

the college, I had never heard the subject mentioned among the students, except as matter of reproach and ridicule. At least this is true, so far as my intercourse with the students was concerned. Those who professed piety, either through timidity or unconcern, seemed to let the subject rest, and were chiefly devoted to indolence, or literary ambition. But while religion was shamed and fugitive, irreligion was bold and free. A majority of the students were avowedly destitute of piety; and of these a large portion were open or secret infidels; and many went to every length they could reach, of levity, profaneness, and dissipation. So many animosities and irregularities prevailed, as to endanger the general reputation of the seminary.

"Some of the students who were differently situated from myself, may perhaps have noticed preparatory movements on the common mass of mind, indicating an undercurrent of feeling, gradually gaining strength, and preparing the community for the results which were to follow. But I saw none;— and none such could have been generally apparent. Upon myself, the change opened with as much suddenness as power."

I here interrupt, for a moment, the narrative of my friend, to mention all the indications which I, myself, or my brother officers perceived. The President, with faithfulness, and plainness, urged upon the professors of religion, their duties and their neglect, and held up to them the evidences that they were, as a body, wandering from duty, and becoming unfaithful to their trust. But he had done this, often, before. In fact, he was in the habit of doing it. The difference seemed to be, that though heretofore they would listen with stupid coldness, and go away unchanged,— now they suddenly seemed inspired with a disposition to hear, and with a heart to feel. They began to come in greater numbers to the

meetings appointed for them, and to listen with silent solemnity to warnings and expostulations which had been always unheeded before. All the efforts which were made were aimed at leading Christ's followers to penitence, and at bringing them back to duty. And though it had been impossible before, it was perfectly easy now; and while this very work was going on,— actually before the time had come for thinking of the others,— they began spontaneously, or at least, to all appearance without human exertion, to tremble for themselves. The officers and the religious students were astonished day after day to find numbers whom no faithfulness of expostulation had hitherto been able to affect at all, now coming, of their own accord, and asking for help and direction; trembling with anxiety and remorse on account of their past sins, and with fear of God's displeasure. But to return to my correspondent.

"The first circumstance which attracted my attention was a sermon from the President, on the Sabbath. I do not know what the text and subject were, for according to a wicked habit, I had been asleep till near its close. I seemed to be awakened by a *silence*, which pervaded the room: a deep solemn attention which seems to spread over an assembly when all are completely engrossed in some absorbing theme. I looked around, astonished, and the feeling of profound attention seemed to settle on myself. I looked towards the President, and saw him calm and collected, but evidently most deeply interested in what he was saying,— his whole soul engaged, and his countenance beaming with an expression of eager earnestness, which lighted up all his features, and gave to his language unusual energy and power.

"What could this mean? I had never seen a speaker and his audience so engaged. He was making a most earnest appeal to prevent those who were destitute of

religion *themselves*, from doing any thing to obstruct the progress of the revival which he hoped was approaching — or of doing any thing to prevent the salvation of others, even if they did not desire salvation for themselves. He besought them, by all the interests of immortality, and for the sake of themselves, and of their companions, to desist from hostilities against the work of God.

"The discourse closed, and we dispersed. But many of us carried away the arrow in our hearts. The gayest and the hardiest trembled at the manifest approach of a sublime and unwonted influence. Among some who might have been expected to raise the front of opposition, I resolved not to do it, but to let it take its course:— keeping away from its influence, without doing any thing to oppose it; but neutrality was impossible."

I must interrupt the narrative of the letter again, to explain a circumstance which I perceive is alluded to in the next paragraph. About a year before this time, there had been similar indications of a returning sense of duty to God, among the students. The officers were much encouraged, but our hopes were all dispelled by the success of a manœuvre, which is so characteristic of college life and manners that I will describe it. The plan adopted by the enemies of religion was to come up boldly, and face the awakening interest, and, as it were, brave it down. The first indication of this design which I perceived was this. I had been invited by the serious portion of the students to address them one Saturday evening in a recitation room. I took my seat in the great armed-chair which had been placed for me in a corner with a bible and hymn-book on the oval leaf attached to it, whose form and fashion any collegian will recollect, when the door opened, and in walked, one after another, six or eight of the most bold hardened, noto-

rious enemies of religion which the institution contained. They walked in, took their seats, in a row directly before me, and looked me in the face,— saying by their countenances most distinctly, 'Sir, we defy you, and all your religion:'— and yet, it was with that peculiar address, with which a wild college student can execute his plans, so that there was not the slightest breach of any rule of external propriety, or any tangible evidence of intentional disrespect. Not one of them had, perhaps, ever been voluntarily in a religious meeting at college before, and every one in the room knew it. I can see the leader now, as distinctly as if he was before me:— his tall form, manly countenance, and energetic look. He maintained his ground as the enemy of God and religion, for a year after this time:— but then, that is at the time described in my letter, his eyes were opened: he prayed with agony of spirit, hour after hour, in his open room, for forgiveness; and now he is in a foreign land preaching to pagans the Savior, whom I vainly endeavored on this occasion to bring to him. I do not know whether this description will ever reach him; if it does, he will remember the meeting in the Freshman recitation room,— and be as bold *for* God *now*, as he was then against him. He has been so already.

After a few similar efforts to this, the irreligious party, for it is almost a trained and organized party, determined to carry their system farther still. They accordingly formed a plan for a religious meeting from which every friend of religion should be excluded. They circulated the information among themselves, taking special pains to secure the attendance of every one, and then, one evening, after prayers, as the officers were coming out of the chapel, one of them was astonished at being accosted by two well-known enemies of every thing like piety, who appeared, as they said, from some of their friends, as a committee to invite him to attend a religious

meeting that evening. The officer promised to come; and when, after tea, he repaired to the room, he found it crowded with persons whose faces he had never seen at a voluntary meeting before. There they sat, the idle, the dissipated, the profane, and the hater and despiser of God; there were also numerous others, moral and well-disposed, but regardless of religious duty; but not a single one whom he had been accustomed to see in such a room, for such a purpose, was, on this occasion, allowed to be there.

The officer addressed them faithfully and plainly, urging their duties and their sins upon their consideration, while they sat still, in respectful but heartless silence; looking intently upon him, with an expression of countenance which seemed to say, "Here we all are, move us if you can." And they conquered. They went home unmoved; and all the indications of increasing seriousness, soon disappeared. They continued to assemble for several weeks, inviting the officers in succession to be present, and at last, the few who remained, conducted the meetings themselves, with burlesqued sermons, and mock prayers, and closed the series at last, as I have been informed, by bringing in an ignorant black man, whose presence and assistance completed the victory they had gained over influences from above. All this took place the year before, and it is to these circumstances that the next paragraph in the letter alludes.

"It was probably with an intention somewhat similar to that which prompted the meetings which the irreligious students held by themselves the year before, that the following plan was formed. A student who was temporarily my room-mate importuned me to invite one of the tutors to conduct a religious meeting at my room. I told him I would, if he would obtain the promise of certain individuals, ten in number, whom I named, that

The Hebrew Bible. The President's visit to the awakened student.

they would attend. I selected such individuals as I was confident would not consent to be present. In a short time, he surprised me with the information, that he had seen them all, and that they had consented to the proposal. Of course, I was obliged, though reluctantly, to request the tutor to hold such a meeting. Most of us repaired to the place, at the appointed time, with feelings of levity, or of bitter hostility to religion. My roommate had waggishly placed a Hebrew Bible on the stand. Whether this circumstance, or the character of his auditory, suggested the subject which the tutor chose, I know not:—but after opening the meeting with prayer, he entered into a defence of the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, from external, and internal evidence, which he maintained in the most convincing manner; and then, on the strength of this authority, he urged its promises and denunciations upon us as sinners. The effect was very powerful. Several retired deeply impressed, and all were made more serious, and better prepared to be influenced by the truth. So that this affair 'fell out, rather to the furtherance of the Gospel.'

"My own interest in the subject rapidly increased, and one day, while secluded in my apartment, and overwhelmed with conflicting emotions of pride and despair, I was surprised by a visit from the President. He informed me that he had come with the hope of dissuading me from *doing any thing to hinder the progress of the revival.* After intimating that he need feel no apprehensions on that point, I confessed to him with difficulty the agitation of my thoughts. Apparently much affected, he only said, 'Ah, I was afraid you would never have such feelings.' After remaining silent a few minutes, he engaged in prayer, and retired, advising me to attend a certain meeting of my class-mates for prayer. I felt very much like the Syrian general when offended by the supposed neglect of the prophet; for I thought he would

have seized the opportunity to do some great thing for the relief of my laboring mind.

"With feelings still more excited I repaired to one of my class-mates, who had the reputation of being one of the most consistent Christians among us. I asked him, with tears, to tell me what I should do to be saved. He too betrayed his wonder, and only resorted to prayer with me, in which he could do little, but say, 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on *us*.' Long afterwards, I learned that when he left me, to join a circle assembled that evening for prayer, he told them that my inquiry for the way of salvation, made him feel as if he needed to learn it himself."

The writer of the narrative which I have been transcribing, had *then* a mother: she has since gone home. She was a widow, and he her only child. She was a Christian too, and her heart was oppressed, and her life saddened, by the character and conduct of her son. He wrote to her at this time, and among her papers after her death, he found his letters, and has sent them to me. I wish I could put them, just as they are, into this description;—tattered and torn with frequent perusal. Those widowed and lonely mothers among my readers, whose lives are imbittered by the impiety and wild irregularity of an unconverted son, will understand the feelings which led her, literally to wear these letters out, with repeated readings. As they read them, let them look to God, and take courage, and remember that it is never too late to pray, and never too late for God to answer prayer.

In the first letter, he informs his mother of the indications of a general awakening to an interest in religion among the students, and expresses a considerable personal interest in it. "For the sake of the institution, of religion, and for my own sake, I feel most anxious that the work may go on with power With what joy would I inform

you, that I felt the strivings of the Holy Spirit in my breast. But I can only say, that I feel a growing sense of humiliation for sin. May it ripen into conviction, sincere repentance, and unfeigned dedication of my heart, soul and powers to God." He then asked for his mother's prayers, and thanks her for all her past kindness to him.

The anxious suspense which this letter must have occasioned to the parent who received it, was dispelled a few days afterwards by the following. Before perusing it, I wish the reader would look around, in the village or town, where he resides, fix his mind upon the leader in all the opposition to God and religion, which is made there; some man of accomplished manners and address, superior intellect, and extensive influence,— and the open and avowed opposer of piety, and all of its professors. You must have such a man in mind as the writer, in order to appreciate it at all. Then recollect that this is from an only son to a widowed Christian mother,— transcribed exactly from the tattered fragments which I now carefully put together.

"Amherst College, April 28, 1827.

"My dearest Mother,

"Where shall I find words to declare the wonders of redeeming love? Even in my *low* state, Almighty God has not forgotten me, nor the prayers of my pious friends. How can I describe the peace of mind, the swelling, overwhelming tide of joy which results from an entire submission to a merciful God? I can only say, that there is no happiness like the happiness of a heart devoted to the holy pleasure of its Maker; no peace, like the peace of a mind that is reconciled to God. At the beginning of the present week, my attention was strongly directed to the importance of the soul. I immediately relinquished all other business, and devoted myself to this. My sense of the justice and excellence of the divine law, of the holiness of God, and my own dreadful and sinful condition rapidly increased. Tuesday and Wednesday my distress and anxiety grew more and more overpowering. Under the alarming impression that I had committed the unpardonable sin, I devoted great

and anxious inquiry to the nature of it. When I found reason to believe that this sin could not be brought up against me, there seemed to be a gleam of hope. I felt, or rather learned that I must be wholly resigned to the will of God, yet there was great opposition in my heart. For a long time it seemed as if I would readily submit if I was only sure of pardon. I was making conditions and struggling against impressions, and became almost desperate, believing that my guilt had shut up every avenue of hope. The conflict had prostrated my strength, and could not have been maintained much longer, when I was led to compare my situation with that of the lepers at the gate of Samaria, when that city was besieged by the Syrians: 'if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.' If I continued to hold out against God, I should surely be cut off, and that without remedy; if I surrendered myself unconditionally, and with an undivided heart, I still could but die, while there was every reason to hope that God would not reject a heart offered in sincerity and truth. Accordingly I struggled to obtain this frame of mind, and at length, as I hope, subdued my pride and hostility, so as to melt into perfect submission to the will of God, heartily to confess the holiness and justice of the law, and freely acknowledge my own unworthiness. After I had been enabled by the divine blessing to do this, it seemed so reasonable, so altogether necessary and even so easy, that I marvelled at the blindness, and hardness of heart, that had prevented my doing it long since. At the same time, I was filled with such transport, that it seemed to me as if I never could leave the foot of the cross; as if I wished to retire from the world, to meditate and reflect on the loveliness of Christ. This happy change took place about Thursday noon. The period of my greatest mental distress was Wednesday night. Nature was so exhausted in a conflict of a few hours, that I could scarcely stand. I found it impossible to eat during a great part of this time. The flesh is still weak, but I rapidly recovered strength as I gained peace. I now for the first time realize what is meant by saying, that 'old things are passed away and all things become new.' I no longer see the same countenances, read the same Bible, and feel like the same person. The character of all my acquaintances are entirely changed. My pious friends once appeared gloomy and reserved, now they are benevolent and cheerful. My gay acquaintances seem no longer happy, but mad. The *Book of God* once seldom read, or when read, disrelished or misunderstood, now seems replete with interest and instruction. I am filled with joyful amazement as I learn from it, the love which Jesus has manifested for the world, and the purity and excellence of the divine

character. At the same time it teaches numerous lessons of humility, gives an odious aspect to sin, and warns against our deceiving hearts. I reflect with horror and dismay on my former course of forgetfulness of God, and feel as if it were a privilege to be allowed to attempt, though feebly, to pursue a totally opposite course. The sense I have of my former character makes me feel deeply for all my impenitent friends. I feel constrained to humble myself before them on account of my former bad example and influence, and even with tears beseech them to turn from their sinful ways to repentance and faith. In short I feel a perfect good will, I hope, to all the world, and banish hatred and envy from my heart where they had long been cherished. But, my dear mother, my hope is with great fear and trembling; sometimes it seems incredible that such an one as myself should find any favor with God; and if I have any hope, it is that Jesus Christ might show forth in me all long-suffering, for where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. Sometimes I feel as if I was in rebellion yet; but I do not rest at such a time, till I resign myself anew, and without reserve to my Maker. But, dear mother, I would that much fervent prayer might be offered up, that I may watch my heart diligently, and consider well the ground of my hope, and not be dangerously deceived; and if I find myself under such an awful mistake, that I may not rest there, but give myself no peace, till by sincere repentance and faith I may be reconciled to God in Christ. On the other hand if it should seem that God has magnified his long suffering and the riches of his tender mercies in me, pray that I may be strengthened and established in repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and that I may exercise all the Christian virtues, and walk according to the law of God, increasing in the knowledge of the truth and growth in grace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Oh, my dear mother, on you, on me, and on all the world, may God pour out the influence of the Spirit, to guide and sanctify us, and fit us for an eternity of happiness in heaven. I would wish to write much more, but hope to see you next Saturday or before. My sincere love, and prayers to and for all friends.

"Your affectionate Son."

I have thus followed out this particular case, in order to give to my readers, by means of a minute examination of one specimen, a clear idea of the nature of the changes which were effected. There were, however, many other cases, as marked and striking as this; so

that any person who was a member of college at that time, might be in doubt, after reading the preceding description, which of half a dozen decided enemies of religion, who were at this time changed, was the one referred to. In fact the feeling went through the college;—it took the whole. Nothing like opposition to it was known, except that perhaps in a very few cases individuals made efforts to shield *themselves* from its influence; and one or two did this successfully, by keeping themselves for many days, under the influence of ardent spirit! With a few exceptions of this kind, the unwonted and mysterious influence was welcomed by all. It was not, among Christians, a feeling of terror, of sadness and melancholy, but of delight. Their countenances were not gloomy and morose, as many persons suppose is the case at such a time, but they beamed with an expression of enjoyment, which seemed to be produced by the all pervading sense of the immediate presence of God. I have seen, in other cases, *efforts to appear* solemn,—the affected gravity of countenance, and seriousness of tone;—but there was nothing of that here. Hearts were all full to overflowing, and it was with a mysterious mingling of peace and joy,—an emotion of deep overwhelming gladness in the soul, though of a character so peculiar, that it expressed itself in the countenance by mingled smiles and tears.

The ordinary exercises of college were not interrupted. The President held two or three religious meetings during the week, but recitations went on unchanged, and I well recollect the appearance of my mathematical classes. The students would walk silently and slowly from their rooms, and assemble at the appointed place. It was plain that the hearts of many of them were full of such emotions as I have described. Others, whose peace was not made with God, would sit with downcast eyes, and when it came their turn to be questioned,

would make an effort to control their feelings, and finding that they could not recite, would ask me to excuse them. Others, known heretofore as hardened enemies of God and religion, sat still, their heads reclined upon the seats before them, with hearts overwhelmed with remorse and sorrow, and eyes filled with tears. I could not ask them a question. One morning, I recollect, so strong and so universal were these feelings, that we could not go on. The room was silent as death. Every eye was down; I called upon one after another, but in vain; and we together prayed God to come and be with us, and bless us, and to save us and our classmates from sin and suffering, and then silently went to our rooms.

The buildings were as still this week as if they had been depopulated. The students loved to be alone. They walked about silently. They said little when they met, as men always do when their hearts are full. Late in the evening they would collect in little circles in one another's rooms, to spend a few moments in prayer. I was often invited to these meetings, and it was delightful to see the little assembly coming into the room at the appointed time, each bringing his own chair, and gathering around the bright burning fire, with the armed-chair placed in one corner for their instructer, and the two occupants of the room together upon the other side. They who were present at these meetings will not soon forget the enjoyment with which their hearts were filled, as they here bowed in supplication before God.

On Tuesday and Thursday evenings we assembled in the largest lecture room, for more public worship. It was the same room where, a few weeks before, on the same occasions, we could see only here and there one, among the vacant, gloomy seats. Now how changed. At the summons of the evening bell, group after group, ascended the stairs and crowded the benches. It was

the rhetorical lecture room, and was arranged with rows of seats on the three sides, and a table for the Professor on a small platform on the fourth. The seats were soon full, and settees were brought in to fill the area left in the centre. The President was seated at the table; on either side of him the Professors; and beyond them, and all around, the room was crowded with young men hungering and thirsting after the word of God.

I recollect particularly one of these meetings. It was one of the earliest after the revival commenced, and before us, crowding the settees in the open area, were gathered all the wild, irreligious, vicious and abandoned young men which the institution contained. There they were, the whole of them; all enmity gone, opposition silenced, and pride subdued, and they sat in silence, gazing at the President and drinking in all his words, as he pressed upon them their sins, and urged them to throw down the weapons of their rebellion, and come and submit themselves to God. The text for the evening, if I recollect right, was this, "Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, the kingdom of God, has come nigh unto you." Every person in the room felt that it was nigh. He spoke in a calm, quiet, but impressive manner, and every word went to a hundred and fifty hearts. Many persons imagine that preaching in such a season is loud and noisy, and set off with exciting remarks, and extravagant gesticulations; and it is so sometimes, when men attempt to *make a revival* by their own power. But where the spirit of God really comes, there are very different indications. Every one feels irresistibly that God is there, and that he himself must walk humbly and softly before him. The almost supernatural power which preaching seems to have at such a time is the power of simple truth, on hearts bowed down before it by influences from above. Such a season robs eloquence and genius of all their power; declamation is more than use-

Sincere and honest feeling. The sermon. The hymn.

less, and all the arts of oratory of no avail. There are souls awed and subdued before God, and longing for the light of truth; and he who can supply these desires with the greatest calmness, and directness, and simplicity, will be the means of producing the most powerful effects. A man could scarcely give utterance to rant and declamation and noisy harangue in such a room, even if he had come all prepared to do it. As he should enter such a scene, he would be subdued and calmed by its irrestible influence. He would instinctively feel, that noisy eloquence there would grate upon every ear and shock every heart, and no bold assurance would be sufficient to carry him on.

We listened to the sermon, which was earnest and impressive, though direct, plain, and simple; it told the ungodly hearers before us, that the kingdom of heaven was nigh them, and urged them to enter it. We knew, — we could almost feel that they were entering it; and when, at the close of the meeting, we sang our parting hymn, I believe there was as much real, deep flowing happiness in that small but crowded apartment, as four such walls ever contained.

When the indications of this visit from above first appeared, it was about a fortnight before the close of the term, and in about ten days its object was accomplished. Out of the whole number of those who had been irreligious at its commencement, about one half professed to have given themselves up to God; but as to all the talent, and power of opposition, and open enmity,— the vice, the profaneness, the dissipation,— the revival took the whole. With one or two exceptions, it took the whole. And when, a few weeks afterwards, the time arrived for those thus changed to make a public profession of religion, it was a striking spectacle to see them standing in a crowd in the broad aisle of the college chapel, purified, sanctified, and in the presence of all their fellow students

renouncing sin, and solemnly consecrating themselves to God. Seven years have since elapsed, and they are in his service now. I have their names before me, and I do not know of one who does not continue faithful to his Master still.

But I have dwelt too long perhaps on this subject, and I must close this chapter. I have been intending however to say two things in conclusion, though I must now say them briefly.

1. There are many persons who, because they have seen or heard of many spurious and heartless efforts to *make* a revival of religion, accompanied by noise and rant, and unprofitable excitement, doubt the genuineness of all these reformations. But I ask them whether the permanent alteration, in a week, of nearly all the wild and ungovernable and vicious students of a college, is not evidence of the operation of some extraordinary moral cause. We who witnessed it cannot doubt. Such cases too, are not uncommon. They occur continually, all over our land, producing entire changes in neighborhoods and villages and towns, and very often in colleges. The effect in this case upon the police of the institution was astonishing. Before the revival, the officers of the institution were harassed and perplexed with continual anxiety and care, from the turbulence and vice of their pupils. But from this time we had scarcely any thing to do with the discipline of the institution. Month after month, every thing went smoothly and pleasantly, and we had nothing to do but to provide instruction for industrious, faithful and regular young men; while before, the work of punishing misdemeanors, and repressing disorder, and repairing injuries, demanded far the greatest portion of our attention and care. Similar changes have often been produced in other communities, and the fact that so many persons have thus had the opportunity

personally to witness them, is the real ground of the conviction which almost universally prevails, among the most intelligent and substantial portions of the community, that they are the work of God. That there will be some counterfeits is to be expected. As human nature is, it is certain. But we ought, when convinced that there are counterfeits, not to condemn all, but carefully to discriminate, and to bring before the world the marks of a counterfeit as distinctly as possible, so that nothing but what is genuine may obtain credit among mankind.

2. Reader, there is such a thing as having the heart filled with peace and joy, under the influence of the Spirit of God. Do not doubt it, if you have not yourself experienced it, and do not forget it if you have. The mysterious influence shows itself in many ways. It whispers to the soul sometimes in solitude, at midnight, and beckons it away from the world to God and duty. The morning light, and the return of business and pleasures silence it, perhaps,— but then it will return in sickness, in affliction, and sorrow, and say to the spirit, still lingering about the world, "Come away, come away." It may be disregarded still,— but it will hover near, and like a dove unwilling to leave its master, will flutter round and light upon him again and again. It melts the soul into penitence for sins which have been thought of with cold insensibility for years,— it subdues stubbornness and pride,— it removes the vail from before the tomb, and brings God and the judgment and heaven to view. It gives life and sensibility to the torpid soul,— arouses its powers, nerves the weak, humbles the proud, breaks the chains and fetters of sin, and under its magic power, the hardened, rebellious, stupid enemy of God, rises to life and to freedom. His restless, feverish, anxiety is gone, and joy gladdens his heart, hope beams in his eye, and he comes to his Savior, subdued, altered, purified, for ever. Blessed Spirit, thou art indeed the

light and life of man; —the only real Comforter, in this vale of sorrow and sin. We will pray for thee, and open our hearts to thee, and welcome thy coming. Descend, heavenly influence, descend every where, and bring this sinning and suffering world back to its duty.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONCLUSION.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

THE question which ought to arise, in the mind of every reader, as he draws towards the close of a religious book, is this; "What practical effect is this work to produce upon *my* mind?" The question is generally very easily answered. Some read from mere curiosity; — some to beguile weary hours;— some to be able to say that they have read what their friends and acquaintances have been reading. One man goes over the chapters of such a work as this, thinking all the time how its truths will apply to his neighbors; another scrutinizes paragraph after paragraph to discover if possible whether the writer believes in this theory or that, or to determine the religious party with which he is to be classed; and a third, though he may attend to the practical bearings and relations of the subject, is thinking, all the time, of *other persons*, in applying them. This chapter he appropriates to his wife,— another to his child, and another he thinks admirably adapted to the spiritual condition of his neighbor. The number of readers who take up a religious book honestly and sincerely to promote their own personal piety is very small.

Still there are a few; and it is to these few that the

Very few really accessible. "I wish I were a Christian."

remaining pages of this work ought now to be devoted. There are a few, who do read with reference to the supply of their own spiritual wants. It would be too much to say that all of them have a sincere and honest desire to know and to do their duty, but they have at least some personal interest in it. If they are not really prepared to take the right course, at least the question whether they will take it or not comes up to view. It comes up in the light of a personal question which they at least *consider*. Others read without admitting the claims of personal duty, even to *a hearing*. The intellect, the imagination, the taste, are perhaps in an accessible position; but the conscience and all the moral powers are far within,—protected from all attack,—every avenue sealed,—and every channel of communication cut off, so that the moral slumber cannot be disturbed. It is those only who are *accessible*, that we have to address in the few pages that now remain.

There is a great deal of perplexity often felt, by a class of thoughtful, serious-minded persons, in regard to the difficulties which stand in the way of their own personal salvation. They *wish* to become Christians, they say, but there seems to be some mysterious yet irresistible agency which keeps them back in the coldness and wretchedness of sin. In such cases there is perhaps a wish, a sincere wish, of a certain kind, to become a Christian; but it remains inert and powerless in their hearts; it does not lead them to piety itself, and they feel and act as if there was some mysterious obstacle to their obtaining what they sincerely and honestly desire.

The two great elementary principles of religion are these; the duty of strong, benevolent interest in every fellow being, and of submission and gratitude towards the Supreme. Jesus Christ has said that these constitute the foundation on which all revealed religion rests; and it is

Two great principles of duty; universal and unquestionable.

difficult to find words to express the perfect adaptation of these principles to the purposes of a great moral government,— their admirable tendency to secure universal order and happiness. There is not a statesman or philosopher on the globe who can improve upon them, nor a savage low enough not to perceive their moral beauty and grandeur. They are the golden chain to bind all God's creatures to one another, and to him; complete, —for there is no other principle of duty which can even claim to be ranked with them; unrivalled,— for no other system can be proposed which would even promise to secure the results of this; and undeniable in their excellence and efficacy, — for never, since the world was formed, was a mind so perverse as to call them in question. They *cannot* be called in question. No person can doubt that a moral governor, presiding over moral and intelligent creatures, by prescribing such rules as the fundamental laws of his empire, takes the most direct and efficient course to secure universal harmony and happiness. No man can utter a word against them. There is a feeling within him, which would rise up and silence him, if he should attempt to do it. They stand inscribed by conscience in every heart; reason and justice and truth have set their seals to the record; and they must stand, in characters which cannot be obliterated.

But though mankind cannot question the excellence of the system of duty which God has established for his creatures, they can, in their practice, violate it: and a great many pleasures of various kinds will come by means of such violation. If a man will give up his neighbors' rights and happiness, he may secure some new indulgences for himself, in consequence of it. If he will disobey God, he may find some gratifications in doing what he has forbidden. The question between holiness and sin, is not a question between unalloyed

happiness; and unmixed, uninterrupted misery. It is rather a question between two sorts of pleasures. There is guilty indulgence on one side, and holy peace of mind on the other. There is selfish interest or aggrandizement beckoning to this path, and the happiness of doing good, inviting to the other. In the former the heart may secure the feverish but real delight which gratified propensities and passions may afford; envy and anger may have their way,— revenge may be allowed its intoxicating triumph,— and sinful pleasure may bring her sparkling cup; in the latter, are the peaceful enjoyments of piety,— the sense of protection,— the hope of undeserved forgiveness,— communion with God, and heartfelt interest in the welfare of men. Between these two classes of pleasures, the human soul must make its choice, and the real difficulty in the way of the salvation of men, is, that they do really *prefer the pleasures of sin to those of holiness*; and of course, if they enjoy the one, they must forego the other.

Men very often suppose that they have a love, a desire for piety, but it is something else, not piety itself, which in such cases, they love. When they look directly at the two classes of pleasures above described, they will see, if they are honest, that they do deliberately prefer the former. The pleasures of sin, in some form or other, look alluring, but the pleasures of holiness do not look alluring. The dominion of sin therefore is pleasant; the soul loves its chains, and consequently it does not really desire a rescue. The feelings therefore which it sometimes cherishes, are of a different character altogether from a real wish to escape the pollution and the miseries of sin; for the heart has scarcely any sense of its pollution or of its miseries.

There seem to be two prominent ways, by which an individual may deceive himself in supposing that he wishes to become a Christian. These we ought here

particularly to describe; for the reading of a religious book, if it presses plainly the principles of duty, usually awakens these false desires in many minds. I cannot but hope that many of those who will have perused these pages, will be really led to see sin and holiness in their true light, and by the blessing of God, be led to choose henceforth the path of duty. But there can be no question that far the greater part of those whose hearts are accessible, and who will be influenced at all, will only be led to form those desires which are always ready to spring up in the unrenewed heart, but which have only the form and appearance of a love for piety.

I ought not perhaps to say, that religious reading *forms* those desires in the heart, for they exist already almost every where, and those who cherish them are most likely to be found among the readers of a work professedly exhibiting the practical bearings of religious truth. They read such a work as this, under the influence of these counterfeit desires, and in many cases, the only effect is to bring out those desires to a little greater distinctness and vividness, without at all altering their character. Reader, are you a serious minded, thoughtful friend of religion,—looking for instruction, and thinking that you really desire a renewed heart, and the happiness of piety? Consider carefully what is now to be said, and see whether you have not been mistaken as to the nature of your feelings.

1. The first kind of feeling which is mistaken for a love of piety, is the momentary relief which the mind sometimes finds in religious contemplation, from the fear of the punishment of sin. You are a young man, and from early infancy you have known your duty to God. The kind and faithful voice of a father or mother has, during all the long years of childhood and youth, been gently endeavoring to win you to their Master's service, but in vain. You have chosen sin, and lived in it. At

length, however, as you have left your father's roof and have come out into the world, and as the years, and the duties, and the scenes of childhood are all actually past, and you are separated from them for ever, you begin to realize that life is actually passing away. Besides, the sins of childhood rise to your remembrance. Conscience is perhaps seared in respect to most of them, but there are a few which, when they rise to mind, awaken a peculiar bitterness of remorse, which makes you shut your eyes against the recollection, and turn away from it as soon as you can. It is one of the mysterious principles of human nature that *some* of its moral wounds will not heal. The longer the man lives, the more bitter will grow some of the recollections of early guilt; and in the permanence of these fountains of suffering, which he finds he cannot close, he reads a lesson which his foreboding fears press very strongly upon his mind. He sometimes trembles to think that all his other wounds *may* only be closed superficially, and may perhaps be gathering in his soul secret stores of remorse and suffering, to break out whenever God shall speak the word. That this is the case in fact, with all merely *forgotten* sin, no careful observer of the human heart, or reader of the Bible can doubt. The class of persons I am describing are, however, not very careful observers; they do not really believe that they are laying up such treasures of wrath,—they only suspect it; they now and then get a little glimpse of the power of past guilt, just enough to alarm them.

Besides these gentle stings, which treasured recollections of guilt sometimes give them, as if just to remind them what vipers they have in their bosoms, there is the voice of conscience murmuring against present habits of transgression, and foreboding fears warning of future danger; and the word of God, too, confirming and sanctioning both. You have perhaps often felt these anxie-

ties and sufferings. In the hour of solitude, when peculiar circumstances favor reflection, your heart is thus agitated and distressed under a sense of its past and present guilt. You look at religion, at reconciliation with God, solely as a way of escape from threatening danger. You form a vague determination to seek this safety at some future time, and this intention, as it affords a little gleam of hope, brings a little sensation of relief, and that little feeling of relief, arising from the contemplation of the *safety* of piety, is mistaken for a love for spiritual joys themselves.

The mere thought of religion, as a possible future possession, brings thus very often a feeling of relief to the conscience, although the heart may not in the slightest degree lose its love for sin, or relax its hold upon it. Conscience is bribed to be quiet by *a good intention*, a promise,—to be fulfilled at some future day. Though the soul loves irreligion as much as ever, and shrinks back, as much as ever, from humble, broken-hearted penitence, and communion with God, and faith, and spiritual joy, it still fancies that it has a desire for piety. "I wish I were a Christian," it says;—it means, "I wish I could escape the consequences of sin, without having to give up its joys."

Reader, is this your state of mind? Do you wish for piety only as a means of escaping present remorse and anxiety, and future danger, while you still wish to cling to sin? The way to determine whether you do or not, is to withdraw your thoughts from the *consequences* of sin and holiness, and fix them on sin and holiness themselves. Does the idea of coming and giving yourself up wholly, soul and body, to God, look pleasant to you? A child who loves his father, will take pleasure in bringing his work, whatever it may be, where his father is, that he may do it by his side. Now does the idea of bringing your work, every day, to *your* father, so that you may always

be in his presence, working by his side, look pleasant to you? Is there any thing alluring in the idea of examining thoroughly all your sins, and bringing them out before God in complete exposure? Can you see any pleasure in penitence, in submission, in a feeling of utter and helpless dependence on God? Do you like the idea of giving up your favorite selfish schemes, and coming to identify yourself with his cause,—so as to make yourself one with him, in object and pursuit? As you look abroad over the world, and see the condition of the human race, do you feel like embarking your all in the work of attempting to restore it? I do not mean to ask whether you can drag yourself up to these duties,—whether you can find motives enough to drive or frighten you to the mechanical performance of them.—But do they look *pleasant* to you? Does the enterprise seem *alluring* and *agreeable*? These are the questions which you ought to ask yourself, if you wish to determine whether you have any real desire for piety. It is not enough that you should have anxiety and foreboding fears from which you find a partial and momentary relief, in the vague intention of one day beginning to serve your Maker. The safety, the peace, the promised rewards of piety, of course look alluring to all men. The great question is, how do you feel about *piety itself*.

In regard, thus, to a very large proportion of those who think they wish to become Christians, their interest in the subject amounts substantially to this;—they are so desirous to escape from the threatening dangers of sin, that they are *almost* willing, even to *take religion* as a means of escape. How much love for piety there is in this the reader may judge.

A person cannot safely conclude that this is not his state of mind, because, when he thinks of the subject, he has no distinct and well defined fears of a future retribution. It is very often the case that the feelings, from

which the thought of religion as a possible future possession, affords a little relief, are mingled emotions of remorse and gloomy foreboding, which present to the mind no distinct objects of dread, but which still disturb the peace. Now it is plainly of no consequence what form uneasiness assumes; an inclination to become a Christian, based in any way on a desire to avoid uneasiness, is a very different thing from loving it on its own account. Do the duties of God's service look alluring to you? If they do not, you plainly have no real love for piety; if they do, you are of course a Christian, for to love these duties and to perform them, are inseparable.

Let no one however suppose from these remarks, that a fear of future punishment, or a desire to escape the uneasiness and the remorse attendant on continuance in sin, are wrong. They are not wrong. The Bible every where endeavors to awaken them; and their influence ought to be felt by every human being, far more powerfully than they are. The point urged in the preceding paragraphs is that these desires alone, *while the heart revolts from piety itself*, are no desires for religion. Let not therefore the young disciple who is just beginning to love and serve his Maker, be led to despond, because he finds himself so much under the influence of a desire to get free from the burdens and dangers of sin. You do right to wish to escape suffering; you do right to act under the influence of that wish. Your steps should be quickened — your ardor and alacrity should receive an impulse from a sense of the greatness of the dangers, from which you are endeavoring to fly. The question is not whether you are *driven;* but whether you are *allured as well as driven.* You are weary of present remorse, and you shrink from future suffering. It is well. Do you also love holiness and reach forward to it as, in itself, a spiritual treasure. He who has real desires for piety, partakes of

the fears and anxieties which agitate him who has not; but he has love and hope, besides. The one is like the disobedient child, who has rebelled against his father, broken away from his authority, and gone from his presence; and at night, he is bewildered in a forest, and terrified by darkness and storm,— *but yet he will not go home.* The former is another son, who having wandered in the same way, is equally distressed at the dangers which threaten him, and trembles perhaps even more than the other, at the thunder and the wind;— but *his face is towards the dwelling he has left*,—his heart is melted, and he longs to be again at his father's side, to ask his forgiveness, and once more to be happy under his protection.— Reader, do you really wish to return?

2. I have said that there are two forms of interest in religion, which are often mistaken for sincere desires for piety. The first, the one which we have described, may be called the interest of *anxiety*, the second that of *poetic taste*. There is a strong poetic interest which may be excited by many subjects connected with religion, and on this, a heart may dwell with delight, while it has no returning sense of duty, no relenting for sin, and nothing but dislike for the actual service of God.

It is the refined and sensitive mind which is most exposed to this danger,— and this too generally in the earlier periods of life, when the imagination is active and vigorous, and the bosom easily swells with the emotions she excites. A young man of such a character, rambles at sunset on a summer evening, on the sea-shore. All is stillness and beauty. The surface of the water is smooth and glassy, and reflects, even to the distant horizon, a silvery light. On this liquid mirror, here and there a verdant island seems to float, doubled by reflection, and around some distant point of land, a boat ploughs its way, the sound of the dip and impulse of its

oars coming distinctly to the observer's ear, across the smooth expanse which spreads itself out before him.

He gazes on this scene an hour,— now watching the wheeling of the sea bird in his flight,— now tracing the line of the distant shore, following it, on one side to the lofty and rugged precipice where it abruptly terminates, and on the other, running out on the attenuated sandy point, which glides down into the water so gradually that he cannot fix the boundary between sea and land;— and now watching, both with eye and ear, the ceaseless regularity with which the gentle swell of the water foams against the rocks at his feet.

Presently he perceives a zone of faint and almost imperceptible shadow, rising in the east,— the dark harbinger of night; for darkness sends forward the sombre signal of its coming, into the same quarter of the heavens which beams, in the morning, with the bright precursor of the day. He looks towards the western sky, and Venus shines with a faint beam, the earliest star among the thousands which are soon to kindle up the sky. Clouds, magnificent in form and splendid in coloring, float in the sun's last rays. Their brilliancy however gradually dies away. The bright, gilded edge becomes obscured,— the crimson and the purple fade into gray, and the broad and splendid expanse of air, so bright with mere reflection, that it seemed like a flaming curtain floating in the sky, loses its hues, and stars shine out one by one, all over the darkening expanse. The gorgeous mass of cloud too, in the horizon, exchanges one glory for another;— for while its brilliant colors fade, and its bosom grows dark, the beaming flash of lightning now and then faintly spreads over it, revealed by the very darkness which robbed the cloud of superficial splendor.

The observer of all this, sits upon the rocky shore, in a reverie of enjoyment. As a mere scene of physical beauty, it is capable of making a strong impression;

but the poetic interest which it excites, is greatly increased when he conceives of the Supreme Divinity as presiding over this scene, and sees his skill and taste in every beauty, and his direct act in every change. He, who, in contemplating the glories of creation, gives Jehovah his proper place in the conceptions which he forms, rises far above the mere poet or philosopher. Bringing in life and intelligence in any form, always exalts and ennobles a scene of natural beauty,— and when the life and intelligence thus brought in, is the great God and Father of all, the measure of moral beauty and grandeur is full.

Besides, while an observer, with a heart capable of enjoying such a scene, thinks of the Deity as presiding in it, he can find much poetic interest in many aspects even of his own relations to that Deity. He reflects that the Almighty power, which could arrange such a scene as that around him, and give to the whole its indescribable power to touch the human heart, can never be at a loss for the means to make his creatures happy. He gazes into the lofty sky, and the extent and spendor of the view give him some faint conception of the immensity of the community over which God presides. He thinks of this little world, as a revolted province; and as he fancies that allegiance and harmony and happiness reign in all the bright regions before him, his heart swells with a sort of chivalrous desire to join the minority here, in their efforts to restore Jehovah's reign. The spirit which rises in his breast is that of romance,— of chivalry. If God's kingdom was a political or a military one he would press forward at once to its banner. But alas,— it is a kingdom of *holiness*. To enter it he must come down from his high imaginations, and go to work in penitence and humility among the corruptions of his own heart,— and this he cannot do. He can admire and love magnificence, whether natural or moral, but he has no heart for *inward purity*.

These feelings not wrong; only insufficient of themselves.

In the case which I have supposed, the poetic feeling which has invested some of the aspects of religion with a charm, is very strongly marked. It seldom exists so distinctly, and occupies the soul so exclusively, as in the case I have described. This play of the imagination is more frequently mingled with other feelings, and some careful discrimination is necessary to ascertain how far the heart is under its influence. Here however I ought to give a similar caution to the one annexed to the preceding head; that is, a caution to guard the reader against supposing that the feelings which I have thus described are *wrong*. They are not wrong, when united with penitence and faith. Alone, they are insufficient. They may properly mingle with piety, though they can never constitute it.

No renewed mind whatever, unless it is enveloped in hopeless stupidity, can look upon the ever varied scene of beauty and grandeur which is presented to us here, without some such swelling emotions of joy that God, the Maker of all, is his father and friend. Let no one conclude, therefore, because he can perceive such feelings in his heart, that therefore all his interest in piety is of the wrong kind. The question is not, whether you have these feelings, but whether you have any besides these. You love the magnificence of nature,— the beauties of the morning,— the splendor of the sky,— the roaring of the ocean,— and the terrific sublimity of the midnight storm. You enjoy the contemplation of God, when you consider him as the presiding power which rules over all these scenes. All this is well. But do you also love, and long for *inward purity*. Do the feelings of penitence and faith, and humble, childlike submission, appear to you as spiritual treasures, which you earnestly desire to bring home more and more fully to your soul;— or do you loathe them, and wish to be free to live and act and feel as you have done? If the latter is the case, you

must not mistake any serious thoughts or deep emotions which you may feel, for real desires for piety.

There cannot be any obstacle whatever in the way of a return to God and to duty, when the heart really desires the return. Wishing for communion with God, reconciliation to him, forgiveness for the past, and guidance and protection for the future, implies every Christian grace; and where the heart really feels such desires, it must, in some degree at least, experience the fruition.

And yet no idea is more common than that a person remaining impenitent, may wish to be a Christian. You think, perhaps, my reader, that this is your case. You wish you were a Christian, you say; but the way is dark before you. There is some mysterious obstacle which you cannot overcome. But reflect a moment, and you will see how impossible it is that there should be any such obstacle. It cannot be in your hearts;— for the difficulty in the heart must have been surmounted before you could have any real love for piety. It cannot be any compulsion, or physical restraint from without;— for such causes cannot control the movements of the human soul. It cannot be in God; — for he surely wishes to have all those come to him who would love his service. It cannot exist at all. If you wish to be the Lord's, he is all ready to receive you. If you think you should be happy as a subject in the kingdom of heaven, the way is all open before you to enter it. Go on. In beginning to love piety, if you have for it any love at all, you have passed by all the barriers which obstructed your way. You have henceforth only to drink as freely as you please, of the waters which you say you love.

It is undoubtedly true that many persons imagine that they wish to be Christians, when in fact they have

only one of the two forms of religious interest which have been just described. There are some, however, who really feel desires which rest upon God as their object, and who yet find, as we have already intimated, these desires so mingled with other feelings, and even so absorbed in them, that they live in constant despondency, and sometimes sink almost to despair. Others shut their eyes to the worldly motives which mingle with their purer desires, and imagine that all their ardent interest is holy zeal for God;— and they press on, with a proud and careless step, till they are humbled by an unexpected fall. Thus they err on opposite extremes. Neither is careful to separate the mingled feelings and desires which reign within him; but one calls them all right, and the other, all wrong. Guard against this mistake. Make some discrimination, and ask yourself whether you have any real desires resting on union with God.

This work will fail of its design, if it shall not be the means of leading some, at least, of its readers to these right desires. If among all who shall read the volume, there is one who is led by it, to seek God, and is now, as he draws towards the last page of it, resolved to live no longer in sin, but to enter into the service of his Maker, I cannot more appropriately close this chapter than by devoting the few remaining paragraphs in giving a few parting words to him. Reader, are you this individual? Have you, as you have passed on from chapter to chapter of this work, seen your sins,— felt your need of a Redeemer,— desired forgiveness in his name,— and felt some rising emotions of gratitude at the thought of the sufferings which he endured for you? Are you ready to enter God's service? If so, listen attentively to these my parting words

1. Become *wholly* a Christian, if you mean to become one at all. Do not try to come and make half a peace with God, or to seek a secret reconciliation. If you have been in sin, renounce it entirely. If you have been in error, abandon it openly. Do not be ungrateful or cowardly enough to wish to conceal your new attachment to the cause of God, or to avoid an acknowledgment that you have been in the wrong. Take the side of God and duty openly, distinctly, fearlessly. This is your duty;— and, besides, it is your happiness. A half Christian is always a most wretched one.

2. Be a humble Christian. Do not fancy yourself an extraordinary instance of religious zeal, or look down with affected wonder on the supposed inferiority of those who have been longer in their Master's service. You may be as ardent, as devoted, as pure and holy as you please; but do not draw comparisons between yourself and others, till you have been tried a little. Remember that the evidence of piety is chiefly its fruits, and that well grounded assurance can come only after years of devoted, and tried, and *proved* attachment to God.

3. Remember that your chief duty is, for some time to come, with your own heart. Look within, and make every thing right there. It is of fundamental importance, however, that when you look within, you do it, guided by the principles of the Bible and of common sense, and not by those of speculation, and metaphysical philosophy. Try to see that your heart is right; endeavor to cultivate the plain and unquestionable characteristics of piety;— but do not lose yourself in mystical speculations about the nature of regeneration, or in vain attempts to analyze and comprehend what will certainly elude your grasp.

A great number of young converts, instead of enter-

ing immediately into the service of God, cultivating the spirit of piety, and endeavoring to do common and practicable good, seem immediately to turn, as soon as they become sincerely interested in the subject of religion, into metaphysical philosophers, speculating and experimenting upon their own hearts. Their object seems to be, not to become holy, but to understand metaphysics. Do not let this be the case with you;— cultivate *piety*.

Do not waste any time in trying to determine at what precise time you became a Christian, nor distress yourself because you cannot determine it: nor perplex your mind and impede your religious progress, because you cannot positively ascertain whether you are really a Christian or not. If the service of God looks alluring to you, press forward into it, without stopping to consider the difficulties of determining how you came where you are.

There is perhaps no more common source of perplexity and discouragement to the young Christian than this. He thinks he must be able to tell precisely when he began to serve God, or else he can have no evidence that he really has begun to serve him at all: But that time cannot be determined. In a very large number of the cases where it is supposed to be determined, the period which is fixed, is probably fixed by mistake. Deposit a little seed in a place of warmth, and moisture, and watch it as narrowly as you please, and see if you can tell when it begins to vegetate? Equally impossible is it, in most cases, to determine the precise period when the first holy desires sprung up in the human heart: and it is useless, as well as impossible. The only question of importance is, whether the seed is growing,— no matter when, or how it began to grow.

Or rather, I should perhaps say, the only question is, by what cultivation we can make the seed grow most rapidly: for important as it is, that every Christian

should know what are his condition and his prospects in reference to God and eternity, there is undoubtedly such a fault, and it is a very common one, as pursuing this inquiry with too great earnestness and anxiety. Many a mind wears and wastes itself away, and exhausts its moral energy, in fruitless endeavors to determine its own spiritual state, when peace and happiness would soon come, if it would only press on in the work of duty.

Still, however, the Christian's first work is undoubtedly with his own heart,—to examine its tendencies, to study its deceitful ways, to correct its waywardness, and to bring it more and more completely under the habitual dominion of the principles of piety. When a religious life is first commenced, the interest of novelty, and the various excitements of the new moral position which the soul assumes, withdraw it, as it were, from the influence of ordinary temptations, and sin falls asleep. The inexperienced and deluded disciple imagines that he has obtained a decisive and a final victory: but returning temptation will bring it out again, with all its original power; and this power will be exercised with redoubled effect, on account of the unguarded position of the soul which it assails. Look within, then; keep up a constant watch and warfare there, and while you do not neglect your duties to those around you, remember that your first and greatest duty is, to secure the salvation and the spiritual progress of your own soul.

4. Cultivate as highly as possible, what may be called the external exellences of character. Be courageous, noble, generous, benevolent, just; and let all around you see that it is the tendency of Christianity to carry forward human nature in every respect,—to advance it to all the excellences of which it is susceptible. On this principle, cultivate such habits of thought and feeling as shall lead you to shrink instinctively from every mean or

unworthy act. Be frank and open and honorable in all that you do. Give no man any opportunity to complain of you for the spirit which manifests itself in your dealings with him. Avoid the reputation of being miserly, or close, or ill-humored, or proud;— and the best way to avoid the reputation of these things, is to avoid the reality. Rise to the possession of a nobler spirit than that which reigns in the selfish hearts with which the world is filled; — you do, in reality, if you are a Christian, stand on loftier ground, and you should feel this, and be led by it to higher and more honorable principles of conduct than others exemplify.

5. In your feelings towards all around you, be indulgent and liberal. When you think of men living obstinately in sin, remember how long you were in the same condition, and let this reflection quell the rising emotion of impatience, and suppress the censorious tone. Make allowances for the circumstances and situation of those who are doing wrong;— not to excuse them, for no temptation is an excuse for sin, but to remind yourself that under a similar exposure, you might very probably do the same; and to lead you to feel commiseration and sorrow, rather than to exhibit censorious and denunciatory zeal, in respect to the faults you witness.

Liberality, however, in respect to the opinions or conduct of others, does not require that you should admit or believe every body to be right; it only regulates the feelings with which you regard what you know to be wrong. Many persons seem to imagine that liberality forbids their saying or thinking that their neighbor is in error, or that his actions are to be condemned. But can any Christian grace thus obliterate all moral distinctions, and bring confusion and derangement upon the lines which separate truth from falsehood and right from wrong? No. Let your opinions on moral subjects be

distinct and clear. Express them on proper occasions, frankly and fearlessly; but remember while you do this, that you yourself have spent a large portion of your life involved in the common guilt of the human family, and that you have been preserved from its extreme enormities, only by the influence of restraining circumstances and by the grace of God. "Who maketh me to differ," should be your first thought, when you find yourself feeling a rising irritation against sin.

Do not exaggerate the religious differences between yourself and others, or overrate their importance. Be willing to see piety, wherever you can find it, and be bound to all who possess it by a common sympathy. If they differ from you in this or that article of belief, do not fix your eye obstinately upon that difference, and dwell upon it, and dispute about it, till you effectually sunder the bond by which you might be united. Look for *piety*. Wherever you find it, welcome it to your confidence and sympathy. In all your efforts to do good, too, aim at the direct promotion of piety, not at the eradication of religious error. Your attacks upon error, will only strengthen it in its entrenchments; but piety, wherever you can make it grow, will undermine and destroy error, more surely than any other means you can employ.

6. In the formation of your own opinions, be independent, and bold, but cherish that modesty and humility which will always be inspired by a just estimate of the limits of human powers. In the first place, be independent; use your own reason, your own senses, your own Bible. Be untrammeled; throw off the chains and fetters which compel so many minds to believe only what they are told to believe, and to walk intellectually and morally, in paths marked out for them by human teachers. The Bible, and the field of moral observation are open

before all, and you ought to go into this field as an original and an independent observer. In the second place, be modest. It is the characteristic of a weak mind to be dogmatical and positive. Such a mind makes up in dogged determination to believe, what it wants in evidence. Come to your conclusions cautiously; and take care that your belief covers no more ground than your proofs. Do not dispute about what you do not understand, nor push your investigations beyond the boundaries of human knowledge. Men are often sadly perplexed with difficulties which arise from the simple fact that they have got beyond their depth. If we go far away from the region of practical duty, our light goes out;— we are puzzled with difficulties, and seeming contradictions, which we cannot reconcile. We are like a school boy with a map of the world before him. The delineations of England and America are plain, but when he goes out towards the boundaries of the circles, all is distorted by the effect of the projection, and his puzzled head cannot exactly understand how Greenland and Nova Zembla can come together. Be bold and independent, then, in forming your opinions, within the region which is fairly before you,— but proceed with a cautious and modest step, when you go beyond these bounds.

7. *Grow*, in piety. Many persons consider conversion as the completion of a change, which leaves nothing to be done during the rest of life but to rest in idle expectation of the happiness of heaven. But conversion is not a change completed;— it is a change *begun*. It is the first favorable turn, in a desperate disease, and must be followed by the progress of convalescence, or health will never come. Make it your great work therefore to grow thus in piety. Watch your own heart, and take a special interest in studying its mysteries, and detecting its deceits, and understanding its sins. Notice its changes

so as to observe the indications of progress, or the symptoms of decline. You will take a strong interest in this work, if you engage in it in earnest. A man who has a large estate, takes pleasure in planning and carrying forward improvements upon it. He supplies its deficiencies, and adds in various ways to its conveniences for business, or its means of enjoyment; and he takes pleasure in this, not merely on account of the increased value hereby given to his property, but because it is a source of direct gratification to watch the progress of improvement, especially when that progress is the effect of his own efforts, and is directed by his own skill. Now an interest similar in nature to this should be felt by every Christian, in the moral and spiritual advancement of his own soul. You must not be content to be stationary,— to go through, day after day, the same round of religious duty; merely as good a Christian to-day as you were yesterday, and looking forward to no improvement to-morrow. No; let it be your distinct understanding that when you abandon your life of ungodliness and sin, and come and give yourself to the service of God, your work is *entered upon*, not *concluded*. Expect to press onward. Be vigilant,— be faithful,— and look forward to your future Christian course, as to a path of difficulty and trial. Go on in it perseveringly, from contest to contest, and from victory to victory.

8. Look to the Savior for moral protection. Keep as near as possible to him. Do not trust to your own resolutions or your own strength for the means of resisting temptation and sin. Just so far as you do, your Christian course will be a series of feeble, faltering efforts, alternating with continual slips and falls. The power which rescued you at first, is the only one that can keep you now, and as you go on therefore, through the years of trial and temptation and duty which are before you, rest

all your hopes on Him. The journey will be pleasant and safe, though difficult, if you go under the Savior's protection, and keep constantly near to him. It will be sad and sorrowful enough, both in its progress and in its termination, if you be left to go alone. Your hopes of forgiveness for the past should rest on Him,— so should your hopes of spiritual protection for the future. In a word, the edifice of salvation must rest on Him as on its CORNER-STONE.

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